

Service for Week 16th – 22nd December
2024- 4th Sunday in Advent By
Chaplain Andy



Visitation, by Domenico Ghirlandaio (1491), depicts Mary visiting her elderly cousin Elizabeth.

Opening Prayer Gracious God, open our eyes to the breadth of your love, the wonder of your mercy and the extent of your goodness, and so may we give you the worship and adoration due to you, this and every day. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,
on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass
against us. And lead us not into
temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory
for ever and ever.

Amen

Bible Reading Luke 1 39-45 (46-55)

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of

Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

In a loud voice she exclaimed:
"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"

Mary's Song

And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to

Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers.”

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

Holy words, Holy wisdom,

Thanks be to God.

Reflection

Our reading today contains the Song of Mary known as **The Magnificat** (Latin for "[My soul] magnifies [the Lord]"). In this song Mary the blessed Mother of Jesus praises God for choosing her, a person of very modest means and status to bring Jesus the Son of God into the world. Mary also goes on to praise God for his 'Mighty deeds' the things that God has brought about over the years.

It is the song that Mary sings as she is so full of joy when arriving at her cousin Elizabeth's house. To me this is one of the most wonderful accounts in the gospels – this time when Mary who is pregnant travels to stay with Elizabeth who is also pregnant. Wonderful because it confirms the direct connection that God made with each one of us by coming in Jesus to an ordinary family. Not to a family with royal or of high status within that community but to a family of humble means and to one that we can all identify with in human terms whatever our circumstances today.

The fact that Mary goes to visit Elizabeth, another family member while they are both pregnant is

something we can understand and identify with. They get together to share their joy but also, I am sure to share their problems and concerns. In those days there was a very high infant mortality rate and childbirth held many dangers for babies and mothers.

But we know that Mary and Elizabeth survived as did their babies Jesus and John and from this modest and ordinary family came the extraordinary.

We may think that some of the accounts of the birth of Jesus that we will hear again over this Christmas time have perhaps become romanticized over the years. With some aspects of the nativity more like a fairy story told to children but not taken entirely seriously by adults.

I believe the account of Mary going to visit Elizabeth before they both give birth brings us back to reality. Back to why God came in Jesus to be part of a family and connect with humanity- to connect with us- you and me. For us to know God personally and to share his purpose and his love. That with all the joy of Mary's song is what we will celebrate this Christmas!

Amen

Closing Prayer

I thank you God for coming in Jesus and the love you have brought to my life now and forevermore.

Amen

Prayers inspired by 'Prayerfully Yours' by Nick Fawcett