

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (or a hymn) Drop down dew from above, you heavens, and let the clouds rain down the Just One; let the earth be opened and bring forth a Saviour.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 79)

ANTIPHON: Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

RESPONSE: Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

LECTOR: O shepherd of Israel, hear us, shine forth from your cherubim throne. O Lord, rouse up your might, O Lord, come to our help. **R.**

LECTOR: God of hosts, turn again, we implore, look down from heaven and see. Visit this vine and protect it, the vine your right hand has planted. **R.**

LECTOR: May your hand be on the man you have chosen, the man you have given your strength. And we shall never forsake you again: give us life that we may call upon your name. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Alleluia, alleluia! I am the servant of the Lord: may his will for me be done. Alleluia!

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (or a hymn) Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son; and his name will be called Emmanuel.

TODAY'S READINGS Micah 5:1-4; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45

NEXT WEEK (Holy Family, Year C) 1 Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28; Psalm 83; 1 John 3:1-2, 21-24; Luke 2:41-52

Christmas Greetings

Majellan Media will reopen on Monday January 13. Have a safe and holy Christmas with your loved ones. See you in 2025! www.majellan.media



Merry Christmas from Majellan Media

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The vital role of women



22 December 2024 4th Sunday Advent Year C

Fresh from her encounter with the angel Gabriel, "Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country" to visit her cousin Elizabeth who was herself pregnant in her old age. This meeting of two Spirit-filled pregnant women, seeking to understand what God is doing in their lives, is remarkable in the way it captures their very human interaction and their prophetic voices.

In Scriptural terms, all this occurs with the highly unusual absence of male voices in the conversation. Although the meeting occurs in Zechariah's house, he had been struck dumb. Joseph is presumably back in Nazareth. For the most part, we can only imagine the conversations between Elizabeth and Mary as they share their joy and confusion in the unforeseen events.

Elizabeth no doubt had long resigned herself to being childless, but now has to deal with her unexpected blessing. Mary has to come to terms with a blessing that seems to cause more problems than it solves. How will she explain her pregnancy to Joseph?

In Luke's account, the encounter between Elizabeth and Mary is presented in the form of two scriptural hymns or songs of blessing. Today we hear the first of these, which is Elizabeth's song prophetically proclaiming Mary to be the "mother of my Lord". Even though filled with joy in her own blessing of pregnancy, Elizabeth exudes humility, compassion and living faith by focussing on the blessing that Mary's presence is for her – and that Mary's child will be for the world.

Mary's response to Elizabeth is the second song – the 'Magnificat' – which proclaims God's redeeming love for the oppressed and downtrodden people of our world. Together then, Elizabeth and Mary are presented to us as two Spirit-filled, peasant women prophets supporting each other in adversity by singing of God's justice and mercy.

In doing so, they stand in the long Jewish tradition of female voices – Miriam with her tambourine, Deborah, Hannah and Judith – who likewise sing provocative songs of God's coming salvation for the poor and oppressed.

Although the Visitation has been used to depict such lofty themes as the Church's march throughout history crossing mountains to proclaim Christ to the world (St Ambrose 4th century), we also do well to recognise how the story highlights the role of women throughout Luke's Gospel. They are not only major figures associated with Jesus' birth, but they are clearly friends and disciples of Jesus during his ministry, are present at the crucifixion, and are the first to encounter the risen Lord.

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, let us ask for the gift of being open to the surprise of grace in our own lives in the ways of Mary and Elizabeth. May we, like them, sing of God's transforming power coming to life in the birth of the Messiah. Perhaps too we are invited to highlight the importance of women's ministry in 'giving birth' to a less clerical church!

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