

Reflection Questions

- What challenges, if any, are you experiencing during the holidays?
- What changes have you made in your approach to seasonal expectations and family relationships along your recovery journey?
- Has there been someone that delivered the presence of Christ to you as Mary did to Elizabeth during her visitation?
 - How have you expressed your joy or gratitude?

Sunday Mass Readings This Week

1st Reading: Micah 5:1-4a

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19

2nd Reading: Hebrews 10:5-10

Gospel: Luke 1:39-45

4th Sunday of Advent



The hope and peace of our Lord awaits us as we approach the fourth and final Sunday of Advent. We are also in the midst of the winter holidays, which can be an unusually difficult time for those in recovery. Cultural expectations, heightened family tension, or a general sense of loss and loneliness may impact the way we feel and behave this time of year.

We turn to this week's gospel reading to witness the story of Mary's visitation to her cousin Elizabeth:

*Mary set out
and traveled to the hill country in haste
to a town of Judah,
where she entered the house of Zechariah
and greeted Elizabeth.*

*When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting,
the infant leaped in her womb,
and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit,
cried out in a loud voice and said,
"Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb.
And how does this happen to me,
that the mother of my Lord should come to me?
For at the moment the sound of your greeting
reached my ears,
the infant in my womb leaped for joy.
Blessed are you who believed
that what was spoken to you by the Lord
would be fulfilled."*

Mary has just learned that she is pregnant with the Messiah. As part of the angel's message, she has also learned that Elizabeth is six months pregnant and she proceeds in haste to be of service to her older relative. She does not travel for the mere sake of curiosity or to discover if the angel is really telling the truth. Instead, she sets out to uncover more of God's mystery and to do His will.

As we have been given peace and new life from the addictions and unhealthy attachments which once dominated us, we can set out to do the same. In addition to insuring immunity from acting out, service to others helps us stay close to the true meaning of Advent and Christmas. We are surrounded by cultural attitudes which cleverly assure us that Christmas is about getting things. Underneath this belief runs a current of scarcity which reminds us of all that we do not have.

When we are committed to understanding our role in the greater context of God's kingdom, we find grace and blessings in abundance. Just as Mary came to understand her role in the story of salvation, we are awoken to our part in the same story. We might seek to pray alongside Mary as we proclaim the words, "May it be done to me according to Your word."

The more we offer ourselves to the process of recovery, the more meaning we will find in our lives. When our recovery is overlapped with the sacramental life of our faith, we get to know Jesus in an intimate and personal way.

We may be inclined to share glad tidings with those we encounter in the coming days as we turn to God for inspiration and hope. We have been offered a priceless gift of peace and freedom and find joy in the experience of sharing it with others.