

4th Sunday of Advent Homily

When Mary goes to see Elizabeth she takes on quite a journey. Dangerous and treacherous paths through the mountains, and pregnant herself. No doubt she went to see if she could help her cousin, but I would think she probably felt in need of help herself.

Mary, a young woman, finds herself living in two worlds. In one very special world God himself has spoken to her and told her that she is to give birth to the Messiah, that it is through her that God is going enter the world. And in response she has said, "I will do whatever you ask of me."

In her daily world, other women have seen that she is a young woman who became pregnant before she was married, which was a scandalous thing in those days. Not only was it scandalous, but could have led to her being killed. Yet, she has managed to carry on. She is living on a knife-edge and is an embarrassment to family and friends. Her life is full of worry.

So when she heads off to see Elizabeth, I bet she wanted to have an older wiser head to speak to, one who had met God herself in a very particular way, and also I am sure she just wanted to get out of Nazareth where many of the locals would have been talking about her.

And the first thing that Elizabeth says is just what she wants to hear. 'Blessed is she that has trusted in the promise made her by the Lord.' Which means, 'I know exactly what you have been through, and through it all you have believed that the words the Angel Gabriel said would come true, and you have faced everything bravely because of this.'

Of course the words of the gospel are not just directed to Mary but to us all as well, and are really the way all Christians should live.

But for this Christmas perhaps the way Mary managed to face what was going on in the world around her is a good lesson for us all. All sorts of things are going on at the moment. We are preparing Christmas lunches, doing the shopping, arranging numbers for who are staying and who are eating, and at the same time have no idea what Variant Omicron might do to our plans. Is it possible that we could be disappointed in so many different ways? Yes it is. As someone said to me the other day. 'If you catch Covid now Father, that's the Christmas services gone.' There is always someone around to cheer you up!

But we do have to remember that this is one Christmas. It is possible that it might look more like last one than the one before that. We may find that our plans are thwarted at the last minute. But what is Christmas about? Wherever we end up, and whoever we end up with, even with no one, it is God's continuing plan for us that we are celebrating and believe in. The name he gave us for Jesus was 'Emmanuel,' God is with. This is what Mary trusted in. This is what Elizabeth recognised in her. And this is the source of our real joy at Christmas.