

4th Sunday of Advent

During Advent we have pondered on the message of Old Testament prophets foretelling the birth of the Messiah. Today we try to get into the mind of Mary, Our Lady, as she prepared to become the mother of the Lord.

Today's Readings

Micah 5:1-4

In Bethlehem, the prophet declares, the saviour will be born.

Hebrews 10:5-10

Christ came into the world to do God's will.

Luke 1:39-45

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth declares Mary to be of all women "the most blessed".



Reflection 1: It's only in this last week before Christmas that we begin to hear about the "**Christmas story**" itself. For the past weeks we have been **preparing** ourselves to greet the Lord, when he comes. Now we prepare to remember how he first came, by listening to the prophecies of his coming, and by hearing of the events before his birth. We meet the woman, Mary, who herself had been prepared for the coming of the Messiah. She has received the angel's greeting, and his strange news. She has accepted her role in God's plan. Now she hurries to her relative, Elizabeth, who herself bears John the Baptist in her womb. John the Baptist, just as we heard last week, alerts us to the presence of the Lord, as he leapt for joy in his mother's womb. His joy is that God has kept his promise, and is with his people.

But what was it like in that mountainy village as Mary greets Elizabeth? This is the Iona Community's take on this pivotal moment. This is, if you like, the human scale of this unfolding drama.

THE STORY OF Mrs MATTHEW, Mrs MARK AND Mrs LUKE:
The Village Gossips.

Narrator: In any small village, news travels quickly. Therefore, it is only to be expected that the strange changes in the lives of Mary and Elisabeth might have been food for other people's thought.

Mrs. Matthew; Well, ladies, you know how I'm not one for gossip, but wait until you hear the latest. You know that old woman Elisabeth, the one with the man who hasn't spoken for nine months.

Mrs. Mark: Yes, what about them?

Mrs. Matthew: They say she's had a little baby boy.

Mrs. Luke: At her age? She's 88 if she's a day!

Mrs. Matthew: Well, that's what I heard anyway and it was on very good authority!

Mrs. Luke: Are you sure you've got the right woman? You're not mixing her up with her cousin?

Mrs. Mark: Who? Mary?

Mrs. Luke: That's her! Now, I'm not one to talk about anybody, but wait until I tell you this. **She's** pregnant!

Mrs. Mark: Never! How do you know?

Mrs. Luke: You can tell. You can just tell.

Mrs. Matthew: Oh yes, you can tell all right. I heard her in the shop last week asking for a dress eight sizes too big for her.

Mrs. Luke: There you are. Draw your own conclusions. Now, I know that this will not go any further, but I hear tell that she and a certain young man ... are planning to leave the district.

Mrs. Matthew: Who is the young man?

Mrs. Luke: The joiner's boy, Joseph.

Mrs. Mark: Never!

Mrs. Luke: Well, that's what they say and I'm not one for gossip.

Mrs. Mark: So, have you heard what they're saying about the so-called Census?

Mrs. Matthew: No. Tell us.

Mrs. Mark: Well, I happened to hear that the reason the Romans want our names, and addresses, is not to send us birthday cards.



Mrs. Luke: Well, **why** are they having a Census?

Mrs. Mark: To register us for a “poll tax.”

Mrs. Matthew: I heard it was a “community charge.”

Mrs. Mark: “A rose by any other name”

Mrs. Luke: They wouldn’t do that, would they?

Mrs. Mark: Well I’m just warning you. Mind, I’m not one for gossip.

Mrs. Luke: Nor me.

Mrs. Matthew: Nor me.

The story of the visitation keeps the rumour going. Just when we think we can figure God out, predict how God will enter our lives and our world, then God does something none of us can imagine. And the best thing about this rumour is—it’s true.

As we wait for Christmas to come again into our lives, let’s make room for Jesus Christ, who always gives the gossips plenty to talk about.

Reflection 2:

"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb".

Gabriel, the angelic messenger of God, was sent to the insignificant village of Nazareth to proclaim the most glorious event the world had ever known. Mary was told that she would bear the "Son of the Most High" who would inherit the eternal reign promised to King David. The child was to be named Jesus, a name that implied his mission: the "Saviour" of everyone. Mary was given a sign to prove that "nothing was impossible with God". Her relative Elizabeth had conceived a son in her old age. To see this marvellous thing, Mary went to visit Elizabeth in the hill country near Bethlehem. Upon hearing Mary's greeting, the child leaped in Elizabeth's womb. In turn, Mary proclaimed her Magnificat, an expression of her faith in God's promise. Mary was the servant of the Lord who accepted God's will no matter how heavy the cross. Her disposition for listening, welcoming, humility, faithfulness, praise and waiting equip all Christians for ministry in the Church.

Pope Francis condemns European efforts to ‘cancel Christmas’

7th December 2021



Pope Francis pushed back against the **European Commission’s** internal guidelines, which have drawn fire for trying to “**cancel Christmas.**” The pope likened these efforts to dictatorships as he warned against “**ideological colonisation.**”

Internal communications of the European Commission were leaked last week whereby a 30-page document, titled “Union of Equality,” advised members of the Commission **avoid** using the word “**Christmas**” in favour of “**holidays.**”

The document is “anachronistic,” Pope Francis said yesterday during a press conference aboard the papal flight returning from his four-day apostolic visit to Cyprus and Greece. “Throughout history many, many dictatorships tried to do it,” he added.

“Think of Napoleon: from there... Think of the Nazi dictatorship, the communist one... it is a fashion of a watered-down secularism, distilled water... But this is something that throughout history hasn’t worked”.

Francis also said the European Union must take on the ideals of its founding fathers and be careful of not “paving the road for **ideological colonisation**”.

GOSPEL WORDSEARCH

H	A	E	L	H	A	D	U	J	A	MARY	JUDAH	ZECHARIAH
E	A	T	O	T	M	B	O	W	D	ELIZABETH	CHILD	LEAPT
L	B	I	M	E	O	Y	J	R	E	WOMB	BLESSED	FRUIT
I	L	U	R	B	M	O	W	A	S	MOTHER	JOY	PROMISE
Z	E	R	O	A	L	A	T	H	S			
A	S	F	E	Z	H	E	R	C	E			
B	E	D	L	I	H	C	O	Y	L			
T	P	A	E	L	O	T	E	A	B			
M	O	T	H	E	R	S	O	Z	L			
D	E	S	I	M	O	R	P	M	E			