



*Msgr. Joseph A. Pellegrino*

## **Fourth Sunday of Advent: Two Women of Courage**

In the *Gospel of Luke* the Christmas story begins with two women, Mary and Elizabeth. Today we are presented with these women. One, Mary, is a young girl, perhaps around 16. The other, Elizabeth, is an older lady, perhaps in her fifties. Both are pregnant. The first, Mary, has the Son of God within her. The second, Elizabeth, carries John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament prophets and the first of the New Testament prophets. Both pregnancies were announced by the angel Gabriel. When Mary hears about Elizabeth's pregnancy she takes a journey to the hill country to meet her kinswoman. When they meet, today's Gospel, Elizabeth feels the baby within her stirring. Some of the spiritual writers feel that this is the first time that John pointed to Jesus. Years later, thirty years later, John the Baptist would point to Jesus and say, "Behold the Lamb of God."

Mary and Elizabeth were women of courage and women of faith. It took tremendous courage for Mary to allow the will of God to take place within her. She had to hope that Joseph would still accept her as his wife and care for her and the baby. She had to put up with the wagging tongues of her neighbors who did the math and were certain that Joseph could not have been the father. Elizabeth also had to be a woman of courage. To become pregnant at her age was a wonderful surprise, but would she survive childbirth?

Today's Gospel does not convey fear. Instead it presents excitement. Mary and Elizabeth were bursting with excitement. After all, there was a miraculous element to both pregnancies. Perhaps, Mary traveled to Elizabeth because she knew she would find someone who could understand her deep joy. Only Mary and Elizabeth could understand what it was like to be chosen by God for his mission. Only Mary and Elizabeth could understand what joy they had not just to have a child within themselves, but a special child. They needed to share their joy with each other. They needed each other's care and support.

That is why we come to Church every Sunday. That is why we receive communion. We need to be united spiritually and physically to our faith community. We need each other's support.

The meeting of Elizabeth and Mary is the pointing of the Old Testament to the New, the revelation of the Messiah to the people longing for a transformation. It is the message that those who have been chosen to make the Lord present in the world must, like Mary, say yes to God's plans. For God works His wonders in those who trust in Him.

The Lord was with Mary and the Lord is with us. We need to call upon Mary to help protect and nurture the Presence of Christ within us.