

Fourth Sunday of Advent – C  
Fr. Chad S. Green  
Holy Family Catholic Church  
Kirkland, Washington  
23 December 2018

Micah 5:1-4a  
Psalm 80  
Hebrews 10:5-10  
(Luke 1:38) Luke 1:39-45

*See Jesus in Neighbor – Bring Jesus to Neighbor*

On this Fourth and final Sunday of Advent, as we are *waiting* and *preparing* to welcome Jesus Christ into our world tomorrow night at Christmas, in the Gospel we heard the account of the Visitation. The greeting exchanged between the Blessed Virgin Mary and her cousin, Elizabeth, as *they* were *waiting* and *preparing* to welcome Jesus Christ into our world.

They were *waiting* and *preparing* – and they were already *joyfully celebrating* the Good News, that the Lord had fulfilled His Promise to be *with* His people – to *save* His people.<sup>1</sup> And by sharing the Good News and joyfully celebrating together, they were already responding to Jesus' call to be His disciple, and showing us what it looks to follow Him.<sup>2</sup>

They did so by modeling two *spiritual* and *practical* characteristics of being a disciple of Jesus Christ, which we are called to incorporate into our own discipleship. One: the importance of *seeing* Jesus Christ in our neighbor. Two: the importance of *bringing* Jesus Christ to our neighbor.

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First: *seeing* Jesus Christ in neighbor. “When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, ...filled with the holy Spirit, [she] cried out in a loud voice and said, ‘...how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?’”<sup>3</sup>

*Filled with the Holy Spirit*, Elizabeth could see something that was not apparent to human eyes. With eyes of faith, Elizabeth could see the Presence of Jesus in Mary. On the one hand, Jesus *was* bodily Present in Mary’s womb. On the other hand, Mary was not *visibly* pregnant.

And, even if she were, it would still require Elizabeth to be inspired by the Holy Spirit with Divine Knowledge and the gift of Faith for her to believe that Jesus was present in Mary's womb.<sup>4</sup>

As disciples of Jesus Christ, *we can do the same*. We can open ourselves to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to see and believe something that only Faith can tell us is true.

And we see Jesus' Presence in our neighbor because Jesus Himself asked us to: "...whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me...what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me."<sup>5</sup> Every action we do to another – rich or poor – family, friend, or stranger – whether giving love or denying it – every action we do to another is an action we do to Jesus Christ. Whether we feed another, welcome another, care for another, visit another – *or not* – we do those things to Jesus.<sup>6</sup>

Let us ask the Holy Spirit to help us *see* Jesus Christ more and more in our neighbor. And to help us act with love, patience, kindness, and generosity toward others, as we want to act toward Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup>

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Second: *bringing* Jesus Christ to neighbor. Notice the first thing that Mary did after she learned that she was carrying Jesus in her womb.<sup>8</sup> She immediately traveled "in haste" to greet her cousin, Elizabeth.

*Filled with the Holy Spirit*, and as the first disciple of Jesus, Mary's first act of discipleship was to go share the Good News with Elizabeth – to *bring* Jesus to Elizabeth.<sup>9</sup>

As disciples of Jesus Christ, *we can do the same*. We don't keep Jesus to ourselves – we share Him with others. We *bring* Him to others. We act toward others with love, because we

have first been loved by God.<sup>10</sup> We can share God's Love with others because we carry His Love in each one of us.

Through our Baptism and Confirmation, God comes to dwell in us with His Holy Spirit.<sup>11</sup> Through Reconciliation, the Holy Spirit is revived in us.<sup>12</sup> Most significantly, when we receive the Eucharist – the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ – in a way similar to Mary, each of us truly carries Jesus in our body.<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, we can follow the example of Mary. When we believe God's Promise that He is with us, we become aware of all the ways that each of us truly carries His Presence in our body. And, like Mary, we can *make haste* to share His Presence with the world. Each Sunday, and each time we receive the Eucharist, we can *make haste* to share His Loving Presence with our brothers and sisters who long to know Jesus Christ.

Let us ask the Holy Spirit to help us *bring* Jesus Christ more and more to our neighbor. And to help us act with love, patience, kindness, and generosity toward others, as Jesus acts toward them.<sup>14</sup>

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As we *wait* and *prepare* to welcome Jesus Christ into our world tomorrow night at Christmas, we are also preparing for visits with family and friends. These visits are the primary opportunities for us to be disciples of Jesus Christ.<sup>15</sup> One: to *see* Jesus Christ present in all our family and friends. Two: to *bring* Jesus Christ's Presence to all our family and friends. Especially those whom we might have a hard time getting along with; or those who do not know Jesus very well.

This can be a challenge when there exists disagreements, old wounds, and resentments. It can be a challenge to set all those aside. We can all pray to the Holy Spirit. Ask the Holy

Spirit to fill us and to help us *see* and *bring* Jesus Christ's Presence in and to our family and friends.<sup>16</sup>

But not only to our family and friends. To all our brothers and sisters: family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, strangers. That's what Christmas is all about. That is why Jesus Christ came into our world. So that all might come to believe that He truly is with us – *all* of us. And that He comes to save us – *all* of us.

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<sup>1</sup> See Matthew 1:21-23: "'She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,' which means 'God is with us.'"

Note from usccb.org: "Jesus: in first-century Judaism the Hebrew name Joshua (Greek *Iēsous*) meaning 'Yahweh helps' was interpreted as 'Yahweh saves.'"

Also see John 1:9-14, 3:17

<sup>2</sup> See Matthew 28:19-20: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

<sup>3</sup> Luke 1:41-43

<sup>4</sup> The importance of Faith expressed in Luke 1:45: "Blessed are you who believed..."

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 25:40, 45

<sup>6</sup> See Matthew 25:31-46

<sup>7</sup> See Galatians 5:22: "...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."

Also see 2 Peter 1:5-7: "For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, virtue with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with devotion, devotion with mutual affection, mutual affection with love."

<sup>8</sup> See Luke 1:31

<sup>9</sup> See Luke 1:35 and 1:39-40

<sup>10</sup> See 1 John 4:19-21: "We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. This is the commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother."

<sup>11</sup> See *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* 1265: "Baptism not only purifies from all sins, but also makes the neophyte 'a new creature,' an adopted son of God, who has become a 'partaker of the divine nature,' member of Christ and co-heir with him, and a temple of the Holy Spirit."

And see CCC 1279: "The fruit of Baptism, or baptismal grace, is a rich reality that includes forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins, birth into the new life by which man becomes an adoptive son of the Father, a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit. By this very fact the person baptized is incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ, and made a sharer in the priesthood of Christ."

Also see CCC 1316: "Confirmation perfects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which gives the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply in the divine filiation, incorporate us more firmly into Christ, strengthen our bond with the Church, associate us more closely with her mission, and help us bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds."

<sup>12</sup> See CCC 1437: Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and an act of penance "revives the spirit of conversion and repentance within us."

<sup>13</sup> See John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* 55:

"In a certain sense Mary lived her *Eucharistic faith* even before the institution of the Eucharist, by the very fact that *she offered her virginal womb for the Incarnation of God's Word*. The Eucharist, while commemorating the passion and resurrection, is also in continuity with the incarnation. At the Annunciation Mary conceived the Son

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of God in the physical reality of his body and blood, thus anticipating within herself what to some degree happens sacramentally in every believer who receives, under the signs of bread and wine, the Lord's body and blood.

As a result, there is a profound analogy between the *Fiat* which Mary said in reply to the angel, and the *Amen* which every believer says when receiving the body of the Lord. Mary was asked to believe that the One whom she conceived 'through the Holy Spirit' was 'the Son of God' (Lk 1:30-35). In continuity with the Virgin's faith, in the Eucharistic mystery we are asked to believe that the same Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary, becomes present in his full humanity and divinity under the signs of bread and wine.

'Blessed is she who believed' (Lk 1:45). Mary also anticipated, in the mystery of the incarnation, the Church's Eucharistic faith. When, at the Visitation, she bore in her womb the Word made flesh, she became in some way a 'tabernacle' – the first 'tabernacle' in history – in which the Son of God, still invisible to our human gaze, allowed himself to be adored by Elizabeth, radiating his light as it were through the eyes and the voice of Mary. And is not the enraptured gaze of Mary as she contemplated the face of the newborn Christ and cradled him in her arms that unparalleled model of love which should inspire us every time we receive Eucharistic communion?"

<sup>14</sup> See Galatians 5:22 and 2 Peter 1:5-7

<sup>15</sup> See CCC on the family (2197-2257), especially 2204: "The Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, and for this reason it can and should be called a *domestic* church (from *Familiaris Consortio* 21).' It is a community of faith, hope, and charity; it assumes singular importance in the Church, as is evident in the New Testament."

And see 2250: "The well-being of the individual person and of both human and Christian society is closely bound up with the healthy state of conjugal and family life (from *Gaudium et Spes* 47 § 1)."

<sup>16</sup> From Eucharistic Prayer III (*Roman Missal* 113): "...grant that we, who are nourished by the Body and Blood of your Son and filled with his Holy Spirit..."