

For Sunday, December 20, 2015

This Sunday's Scripture Readings

4th Sunday of Advent

<http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/122015.cfm>

Micah 5:1-4a

Hebrews 10:5-10

Luke 1:39-45

The woman had a frantic look in her eye. Her hands were continually measuring out six-inch stretches of sheet on her hospital bed. She would glance at the clock. Then her eyes moved to the window and back to my face. "How can you be so calm?" she asked in a tight voice. I asked her how long she had been in the hospital. "Ever since Thanksgiving and they still can't find the problem." I took her hand. It was so cold. She started crying. "My Thanksgiving decorations are still up." Her grip tightened. "I haven't anything started for Christmas yet." More tears. I put my arm around her and she sobbed. This grandma was inconsolable. From the number of cards around the room and the bouquet of roses on her stand, it was quite evident that she was loved for herself rather than the perfect Christmas she wanted to pull off. If she could only realize it.



That word "frantic" fits much of the activity in this last week before Christmas. There are even hints of it in Luke's Gospel. "Mary set out and traveled... in haste" (emphasis added). Mary's travel wasn't because of a compulsion to pull off the perfect visit to her elderly cousin. Mary's urgency was the deep and tremendous drive to share the greatest good news this earth has ever heard! The Messiah is coming! And then, the even more unbelievable news, God has chosen me to be his mother! Mary must have danced all the way from Nazareth to [Ein Karem](#). Danced and sang! Smiled and skipped with joy! Laughter must have just bubbled out of her! Her traveling partners probably put their heads together and speculated that she was in love! Her sparkling eyes told it all.

Indeed Mary was in love! In love with a God who chose her to be the mother of his Son! A match made in heaven between a most perfect young maiden and God almighty. This is an event that legends are made of! Somehow, just somehow, Mary's cousin, the barren Elizabeth, knew in her heart that this fireball of love was moving toward her. Was it woman's intuition? In this case, it was probably strong waves of energy shooting across space. Elizabeth knew! And, the babe within her knew. Unborn John danced as he met his incarnated Savior! Wow! The energy flowing in this

encounter was absolutely electric! Has the earth ever seen such joy bubbling up within humans?

Here we stand in front of this Gospel. The words are hitting our eardrums, but is the event, the message, hitting our hearts? Is the electricity of this relationship of four people pinging in our hearts? Yes, four people. The greatest who ever lived! Are we having a hard time keeping our joy from bursting out in spontaneous laughter?

Advent is a season of joyful hope. We celebrate the coming of our Savior. We are saved from all the troubles in our world. Every evening we look at the mess of trouble read to us on the news and can become morose. As true Christians we need to let the truth seep down between those rocks of seeming ugly reality. Our joy needs to crack those rocks of fear and sadness and creep up into our hearts and eyes. Joy can't help but radiate from our faces!

We do believe in the Incarnation. We do believe in the paschal mystery. Life will always triumph over death! Yes, Lord, we believe this! Love will always win! Yes, Lord, we believe this! From the stable to the empty tomb, it is trust in God, all the way! Nothing is impossible with God! Rejoice in the Lord, always! Again, I say rejoice!

Patricia DeGroot, ObISB

PRAYER

Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death.
Amen.

NOTICES

ADVENT RESOURCES FROM THE USCCB

The USCCB will once again have an online daily calendar for the Advent–Christmas season. You will want to share this information with parish members, school and religious education staffs, and other interested parties. The online calendar can be found at: www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/advent/index.cfm. A PDF version of the calendar is also available: www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/advent/upload/advent-calendar.pdf.

HOLY YEAR COVER FOR THE FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY

Share beautiful, vibrant art in your parish with a free bulletin cover from LPi. This special Holy Year of Mercy cover celebrates the feast of the Holy Family on December 27, 2015. To download visit LPi's Art & Media Portal at www.portal.4LPi.com.

NATIONAL MIGRATION WEEK, JANUARY 3–9, 2016

The theme for the 2016 National Migration Week, taking place January 3–9, 2016, is “A Stranger and You Welcomed Me.” National Migration Week 2016 picks up on the theme of welcome and, in doing so, calls on each of us to welcome the stranger among us. For more information and resources from the USCCB visit: <http://www.usccb.org/about/migration-and-refugee-services/national-migration-week/index.cfm>.

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Liturgical Publications Inc
2875 S. James Drive • New Berlin, WI 53151
(800) 950-9952 ext. 2469

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