



Bible Study

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Year C

St. Maria Goretti, St.
Augustine, Blessed
Sacrament/ St. Joan of Arc,
and St. Peter Claver Parishes
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When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Lk. 1:41-43 NABRE

Reading I: Micah 5:1-4a

LORD WE WAIT FOR YOU! Though we live in a, "I want it now generation," as Christians we know and accept the fact that waiting on the Lord always involves the passage of time. Just as it does when we are waiting for news, a special TV program, for a plane to arrive, or for retirement, we must wait on the Lord. Waiting on the Lord inevitably means more than enduring the passage of time. It means preparing a suitable place for Him with in us through a patient, hopeful longing for his presence. By waiting, we develop the virtue of patience.

During the past weeks, we adopted the theme, of Lord we wait for your: Justice, Word, and Joy. Now, in full anticipation of Christmas, we say, "Lord we wait

Who am I that the Creator of the universe should care about me? He will come to me because He created me in his image.

on You." Psalm 27: 14 tells us to wait for the Lord in strength and courage. Psalm 130:5-6 also encourages Us with these words, "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and I hope for his word." (NABRE).

The first reading for this Fourth Sunday of Advent gives the clearest prophecy from the Old Testament that the Messiah will come to save all people. It shows the patient and deliberate acts of God. The prophet Micah prophesied around the eighth century B.C. during the reigns of three kings of Judah: *Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah*. He was from outside of Jerusalem and preached against the rich exploiters of the poor. He predicted that a few faithful ones would be saved and God's kingdom would be established. These verses come from the Oracles of Salvation, **Micah: 4:1-5:14**, in which Micah accurately predicts the birth place of the Messiah. Like Isaiah, he predicts that salvation will come from the House of David (vv. 1-4). *Ephrathah* was a small clan in the tribe of Judah from which David emerged. Bethlehem, which means "house of bread", was first called "*Ephrathah*," after the people who lived there. Micah predicted that one greater than David, the Messiah, would come from Bethlehem. His prophecy shows how God patiently designed our redemption. But as God is patient, we should be also. Lord, we wait on you. (v. 3, **Compare Jn. 10:1-16**) **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What is our response to God,s patient design of redemption?

Micah

The Book of Micah consists of a collection of speeches, proclamations of punishment and of salvation, associated with the prophet Micah. Like Isaiah 1-39, the Book of Micah is focused on Jerusalem, Zion, and the Judean leadership. Micah appears to know the tradition that Zion is the Lord's chosen place, but he is critical of the popular view that this election ensures the city's security. (Micah 2:6-13; 3:9-12) He preaches punishment as a consequence of the arrogance and neglect of the leadership in Jerusalem. After that punishment, God will bring the people back to their land and establish perpetual peace. He preached that the will of God for human beings is that they do justice, love goodness, and walk humbly with God. (6:6-8)

Reading II: Hebrews 10:5-10

LORD WE WAIT FOR YOU! These verses from St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews show the benefits of patient waiting for the Lord. If we wait, He will instruct us how to respond to His presence. Those Israelites who waited in courage and strength for the Messiah received an explanation, in perfect detail, of the purpose of the suffering of Jesus Christ. The readings show how intimately and patiently God designed our form of worship of Him.

The author of Hebrews knew why Jesus came. He explained it by building on Psalm 40 and referencing the five types of sacrifices offered in the Old Testament (v. 8). They were: peace offerings (**Deut. 12:18; 16:11**, here called sacrifices); cereal offerings (**Lv. 2:1; Num. 15:1-6**), called offerings); holocausts (**Lv. 6: 22**); sin offerings (**Lv. 4:5-13**) and guilt offerings (see **Lv. 5:14-19**). The Levitical Priesthood offered daily sacrifices that had no effect on remitting sins. (See **Heb 10:11**). Jesus offered a single sacrifice that remitted all sin. The Body of Christ became the instrument by which He offered the perfect sacrifice of obedience to God.

The goal of the letter to the Hebrews was to connect the incarnation of Christ and His atonement for sins with Jewish ceremonial worship. The birth at Bethlehem was the beginning of our glorious redemption at Golgotha. Through patience, we too learn how to worship in spirit and in truth. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Should we meditate on Jesus' suffering at Christmas?

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Gospel: Luke 1:39-45

LORD WE WAIT FOR YOU! Since waiting requires patience, waiting for people can be an annoying experience. As we sit impatiently waiting for the arrival of a family member, co-worker or guest, we ask, "Where are they?" But when the expected one finally arrives, our pulse quickens. We may even jump for joy with the knowledge that the one waited for has arrived. Psalm 62: 2-3 expresses our attitude during the Fourth Sunday in Advent. *"My soul rests in God alone, from whom comes my salvation. God alone is my rock and salvation, my fortress; I shall never fall."* (NABRE) Lord we wait on you.

The Gospel this week unites us with Mary and Elizabeth, as they await the salvation promised and revealed through them. Notice their waiting was active and involved traveling, witnessing and sharing the incarnate, our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. According to ancient tradition, the home of Zachariah and Elizabeth was in the foothills south-west of Jerusalem, about 50 miles from Nazareth. Believing that her role in salvation had been blessed by the "power of the Most High" (Lk. 1:32), Mary journeyed to see and congratulate her cousin, Elizabeth. Elizabeth was miraculously pregnant. Elizabeth knew that the son she carried was the forerunner to the Messiah who was about to arrive. Pregnancy requires patience. Her expectancy of the forerunner of Christ increased her faith. The patience of God is reflected in both Mary and Elizabeth, women who carried the seeds and source of our redemption. The both could say, Lord we wait on you.

Mary's greeting "caused the baby to leap in Elizabeth's womb" (NABRE v. 41). This experience parallels that of Rebekah in Gen. 25:22-23. Rebekah's experience signaled the superiority of Jacob over his twin brother Esau. Elizabeth's experience signaled that Jesus would be greater than his cousin John (Jn. 3:18). St. Luke uses this wonderful literary device to show how our meticulous, patient and merciful God designed our redemption.

Elizabeth blesses Mary with words familiar to Old Testament readers, "Blessed are you!" (v. 42). These were words once spoken to *Jael* and *Judith*, women who were famous for protecting Israel from its enemies. (Judg. 5:24-27) Both *Jael* and *Judith* terminated the enemies of Israel with a mortal blow to the head. These words are fitting, since Mary would bear the Christ who would crush sin and death underfoot forever. (Gen. 3:15, 1 Jn. 3:8) The interaction of these holy women shows us how to wait on the Lord and receive Him in Spirit and in Truth. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Why did God take four thousand years to send His Son to redeem us? How do you react when you think that God is too slow to act?

Pray About It!

Monday

Read Luke 1:39-45. Bring Jesus' presence to someone with an act of kindness.

Tuesday

Attend the Christmas or Vigil Mass and receive the Eucharist.

Wednesday

Collect clothing items and give them to the poor.

Thursday

Donate to the St. Vincent De Paul Society food bank.

Friday

Read Lk. 1:32. How has the "Spirit of God" come to you.

The Immaculate Conception

490 To become the mother of the Savior, Mary "was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role." The angel Gabriel at the moment of the annunciation salutes her as "full of grace." In fact, in order for Mary to be able to give the free assent of her faith to the announcement of her vocation, it was necessary that she be wholly borne by God's grace. (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2676, 2853, 2001)



Mary and Elizabeth rejoice (courtesy of Worship Sounds Music Blog).

Resources: Hebrews, George W. MacRae, The Collegeville Biblical Commentary, New Testament, The Liturgical Press Collegeville, Minn, pp. 1257-1258; The Sunday Readings Cycle of Kevin O'Sullivan, OF.M. Franciscan Press, Quincy University, Quincy, Ill. pp. 17-21; Luke - Ignatius Catholic Study Bible; The Gospel of Luke Commentary, Notes and Study Questions, Second Catholic Edition, Ignatius Press San Francisco, pp. 20-21; Micah - <http://www.usccb.org/bible/scripture.cfm?bk=Micah&ch> Catechism of the Catholic Church 2676, 2853, 2001

This meditation is prepared by Deacon Terrel J. Broussard for personal use in Adult Faith Formation at St. Maria Goretti, St. Augustine, Blessed Sacrament/ St. Joan of Arc, St. Peter Claver and St. Maria Goretti Parishes in New Orleans, La. ©2018