

Fourth Sunday of Advent



The hope and peace of our Lord awaits us as we approach the fourth and final Sunday of Advent. We are also moving toward the winter holidays, which can be an unusually difficult time for those in recovery. Cultural expectations, heightened family tension, or a general sense of loss and loneliness may impact the way we feel and behave this time of year.

We have a chance to reflect upon the willingness of the Blessed Virgin Mary as we hear from the Gospel of Luke this Sunday. Mary's "yes" paved the way for Christ's entry into our world, revealing God's ultimate love for us and salvation from bondage. We turn to this week's Gospel Reading to witness the story of Mary's visitation to her cousin Elizabeth:

*Mary set out
and traveled to the hill country in haste
to a town of Judah,
where she entered the house of Zechariah
and greeted Elizabeth.
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,
"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?
For at the moment the sound of your greeting
reached my ears,
the infant in my womb leaped for joy.
Blessed are you who believed
that what was spoken to you by the Lord
would be fulfilled."*

Mary just learned that she was pregnant with the Messiah. As part of the angel's message, she also learned that Elizabeth was six months pregnant, and she proceeded in haste to be of service to her older relative. She does not travel for the mere sake of curiosity or to discover if the angel is really telling the truth. Instead, she sets out to uncover more of God's mystery and to do His will.

