

Reflection for December 20, 2015

Fourth Sunday of Advent



By Sister Betty Sundry, CDP

The readings for today give us an impressive sense of the history of salvation. In Micah, we get the prediction of the birth of the Messiah; in Luke, we know of this event happening through Mary's assent and her journey to visit her cousin, Elizabeth; and in Hebrews, we are told of how the Incarnation (the life of Christ while on earth) has affected the human race for ages to come.

As we move ever closer to celebrate the feast of the birth of Christ, we get an intimate glimpse in the Gospel reading of the example of friendship of two first-time mothers-to-be. The much younger one is coming from an arduous journey to aid her much older cousin through the rest of her pregnancy and the older one, inspired by the Holy Spirit, cries out her recognition of just who it is Mary is carrying and lets Mary know that the child in her womb recognizes this also. Mary's visit to her cousin, Elizabeth, is but one instance of her selflessness that probably was manifested throughout her whole life. Mary's response to Elizabeth's greeting, "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb," was followed by the joyous prayer we all know as the 'Magnificat' (not given in the Gospel for today).

The generosity behind Mary's visit, and the enthusiasm of the welcoming she received, are compelling and powerful examples for all of us. When we choose to follow this model of relationships in our lives, we are truly living the spirit of the Christmas season. As Joyce Rupp says in one of her reflections on this scene in the Gospel, "Every day we can have experiences of God's love leaping in us by the way we talk to and tend to one another ... All it takes is a generous heart that wants to share love and a humble open heart ready to receive that love." And is this not what the meaning and spirit of Christmas is all about and what we try to inculcate in our children?

To paraphrase the words of our founder Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler, let us love the times in which we live as we strive to spread the meaning and spirit of Christmas in a world filled with commercialism and consumerism, no matter how far we are from reaching this vision of the Christmas season.