

4th Sunday of Advent

Homily: Fr. Shijo George

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We are in the fourth and last week of the Advent. ‘Love’ is the focus of this week. The Fourth Candle we lit is called the *Angel’s Candle*. This candle represents love and the message of God’s love that the angels announced at Christ’s birth.

Today’s Gospel passage recounts the visitation of Mary to her cousin, Elizabeth. In this account, St. Luke brings the two mothers and both children of *Salvation History* together, adding more colour and depth to the anticipation of Christmas. *The Visitation* teaches that, like Mary, if we are ready to impart and share the Divine Presence within us with others, we, too, are participants in the Divine Plan of Salvation.

The spirit of love that comes from charity and the spirit of sharing, in Mary’s life, were the source and energy for her long journey to visit Elizabeth. Mary, full of Grace, was filled with the Holy Spirit. People filled with the Holy Spirit become bearers of the Fruits of the Holy Spirit. Likewise, Mary is the bearer of Heavenly Grace to the family of Zechariah and Elizabeth. The name *Zechariah* means “Yahweh has remembered.” *Elizabeth* means “My God is fullness.” Even though their names depict care and joy from God, they literally underwent bitter experiences in their life; like Zechariah became mute and Elizabeth bore the shame of old age pregnancy; “...and for five months she remained in seclusion” (Luke 1:24). To this situation Mary arrives, and Mary’s presence brings a drastic change to their home.

Mary’s visit sanctifies their home with the presence of the Lord. This is revealed as John leapt in Elizabeth’s womb when he recognized the presence of Jesus; his Master. Both Elizabeth and Zechariah were filled with Joy. Mary, in turn, becomes and exemplifies the *model believer*. In the words of Bishop Fulton J. Sheen; “... though greater than Elizabeth, she visits her in her hour of need. Only as we become little do we ever become great in the eyes of God.”

Mary’s action, as she journeyed with haste to Elizabeth, shows Mary’s profound spirit of charity and social concern towards her aged relatives. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit and the love of Jesus, we will also set out, like Mary, to be with our families, and our brothers and sisters; to fill their lives with Joy and Love.

Like Mary, let us have a heart of understanding, to be sensitive to the feelings of others, and to help them in their needs, and in their time of need.

I leave you with some beautiful words from St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta:

**“Prayer in action is love.
Love in action is service.”**

