

**Advent 4C.18;** Mic 5:1-4; Heb 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45, *Two Unexpected Mothers*

**Can you believe it?**

**Christmas is just around the corner.**

A story is told of a little girl, who dressed as an angel in a Christmas pageant, was instructed to come down the center aisle. The child asked,

... **"Do you want me to walk or fly?"**

You feel as though she almost could have flown. **Don't ever lose the wonder and mystery of Christmas.** The late Peter Marshall said: *"When Christmas doesn't make your heart swell up until it nearly bursts and fill your eyes with tears*

*and make you all soft and warm inside then you will know*

*... that something inside of you is dead."* (eSermons.com/Walk or Fly/Garret.o9)

**Yes, Christmas is a time of *Wonder and Mystery* ....**

**And so, today we celebrate an *impossible* faith in an *inexplicable* God!**

We hear in the gospel, ***"Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken ... to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."*** (Luke 1:45)

In today's gospel, two mothers meet who should not be mothers by human standards. One is too old, the other a virgin. *They are cousins*, but their deeper bond is the two things they have in common: **an *impossible* pregnancy, ... and faith in an *inexplicable* God.**

Do they think of their ancestor Sarah, I wonder? Sarah laughed when she overheard a strange visitor tell her husband, Abraham, she would have a son, even though she was far too old.

**Do Mary & Elizabeth laugh together ... about their *impossible* children?**

They might. After all, they are both filled with the Holy Spirit, who is the source of joy. Do they remember Sarah and Abraham's son? Isaac, *the impossible child*, promised and then born to an aging couple, an *only son demanded back* in sacrifice by an *inexplicable* God? **This was no laughing matter.**

**However, *courage* is also the Spirit's gift.**

Do Mary and Elizabeth wonder about their own *impossible* sons,

... promised and given by that same *inexplicable* God?

Would God reclaim them again? Would God relent again as the knife was raised?

(Source: *Daily Reflections for Advent & Christmas*, G. Glen)

**The two mothers did not know, but we do.** Yes, God would reclaim these only sons as a *gift for us, the way to eternal salvation*. This time God would not withhold the blade. Elizabeth probably didn't live to see *her son, John the Baptist*, stand up to and be killed by Herod. But, Mary did see her son rise from *the crib to the cross*. Mary, an unwavering pillar of *impossible faith*, in an inexplicable God ... even as her son drew his last breath.

**2 Christmas is almost here.** Tomorrow we will celebrate a difficult circumstance, a birth in a stable, but we will also share in the joy of a new birth. There is reason always for gladness *in* this impossible *Gift* from a God

**... whose love lies far beyond our understanding.**

*The prophet Micah* tells us about our *God of Wonder and Mystery* who chooses the *most ordinary, most insignificant, and the least expected*, to bring salvation into our lives, "*The Lord says, You, Bethlehem-Ephrathah too small to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me*

*... one who is to be ruler in Israel...*"

This is the *faith heritage* of Elizabeth and Mary. Today, as we remember these *two mothers* who should not be mothers, their two impossible children, and above all, their faith in their *inexplicable* God, who is also our God, let us ask them to share

... that faith which **expects** God to open the doors to a new world.

This faith goes beyond *sacrifices and offerings*, and delights in open hearts willing to believe *in* the impossible,

to trust in the fulfillment of the ancient Promise of Salvation,

and to risk everything for the sake of a Humanity,

... that God would truly come to this earth, *in Person*, to save.

**Yet, to be honest, we face impossible odds don't we?!**

We know that world catastrophes, family trials, and personal suffering do not stand back for Christmas. When *winter darkness falls across the crib and our lives*, as it must, let us also pray for their courage. The courage that sustains the joy until the dawn breaks through the night, as it did for Mary, and as it will for us.

**My friends are we blessed with this faith, this courage?**

*At this Advent Liturgy*, let us BELIEVE as did two unexpected mothers. We, too, are blessed when we trust that God's promises to us are being fulfilled this very day. We can approach Christmas by drawing strength from the most comforting of promises, that God is *Emmanuel* - "*God is with us*." In all the ups and downs,

the trials and joys of our lives and relationships, God is always with us.

Our awareness of this will be the source of a profound ... *peace of heart*.

***Blessed are we who believe & live our days with this assurance.***

**My friends, we have found Bethlehem!**

(Play the refrain. *Oh Little Town of Bethlehem*)