



4th Sunday of Advent, Cycle C

Micah 5:1-4
Ps 80:2-3,15-16,18-19
Hebrews 10:5-10
Luke 1:39-45

Monday December 24

2 Samuel 7:1-5,8b-12,14a,16
Ps 89:2-5,27,29
Luke 1:67-79

Tuesday December 25

Christmas Day

Isaiah 52:7-10
Ps 98:1-6
Hebrews 1:1-6
John 1:1-18

Wednesday December 26

St. Stephen

Acts 6:8-10;7:54-59
Ps 31:3cd-4,6,8,16,17
Matthew 10:17-22

Thursday December 27

St. John

1 John 1:1-4
Ps 97:1-2,5-6,11-12
John 20:1a,2-8

Friday December 28

Holy Innocents

1 John 1:5 -- 2:2
Ps 124:2-5,7b-8
Matthew 2:13-18

Saturday December 29

1 John 2:3-11
Ps 96:1-3,5b-6
Luke 2:22-35

The final Sunday of Advent shows Elizabeth and her unborn son, John, reacting to the nearness of the unborn Christ. We know that Elizabeth immediately understood that Mary was pregnant with the Lord, because the Gospel says she was filled with the Holy Spirit. But how could the fetal John understand? How could he leap for joy while still in the womb?

If it's true that an unborn baby is not a person with a soul until it takes its first breath, as is claimed by many who believe that abortion is okay, how could the unborn John recognize the presence of the unborn Savior?

The faith to recognize the presence of Christ -- in the womb of people's lives, in the Eucharist, in the humanity of unborn children, etc. -- comes from being fully alive in the Holy Spirit, who was given to us fully during our baptisms. However, it takes a humble willingness to let God change our minds about what we think is true in order to be open to God's Spirit teaching us what is indeed true.

John as a fetus was incapable of understanding anything, especially when it happened outside the womb, yet he leapt for joy. This teaches us that we don't need to see God working in the world or solving our personal problems before we can leap for joy. We don't have to understand what God is doing, and we don't even have to know his plans.

The Holy Spirit enlivened the faith of Elizabeth and John through an act of grace that depended on Christ's future activity. For us, our faith is enlivened by the grace God provides in the Sacraments.

The joy that comes from recognizing the presence of Christ is God's Christmas gift to us. It's a joy that's meant to last all year. It's a lifestyle, not a holiday. It comes from a faith that appreciates God for working mercifully in ways that we can see and ways that we cannot see, because we trust in his goodness. Even when we suffer or feel sorrow, we can learn to recognize the presence of Christ.

And then what? Like John, we are called to be heralds of Christ's presence. How? First by sharing our joy with others.

Reflect & Discuss:

1. How much is the joy of Christ's Spirit within you affecting your outward life?
2. What will you do this Christmas to become more aware of the Holy Spirit increasing your faith?
3. Give examples of how the Spirit of Christmas is really the Holy Spirit.
4. What activities have helped you get into the Spirit of Christmas? How has this affected your preparations for celebrating Christmas as a holy day?