

4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT [C]

December 20, 2009

Queen of Peace Catholic Community
Gainesville, Florida
Rev. Jeff McGowan

1ST READING: MICAH 5: 1-4

He shall stand firm and shepherd his flock...

PSALM 80

Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

2ND READING: HEBREWS 10: 5-10

Behold, I come to do your will.

GOSPEL: LUKE 1:39-45

Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the home of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

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I knew a guy in his thirties and whenever the subject of marriage came up his mother would say, "You've got plenty of time." Finally, though, he fell in love with a beautiful woman he met through Church. At Christmas, he told his mother that he was going to bring her so she could meet his mom. But, he said, just to make this fun, two of her friends were going to come too and mom could guess which one was the one he would marry. The women sat on the couch and mom was very cordial and there was some nice conversation. Then the son said, "Well, Mother, which woman is the one?" She said, "The one on the right." He said, "Wow! You are right, this is terrific, and how did you know?" His mother said, "Because I don't like her much."

In today's Gospel, Mary travels in haste to be with her cousin Elizabeth. It is a four day's journey by caravan. Luke never tells us why she goes; can you guess why Mary would make such a difficult journey when she was pregnant? Here are some scenarios.

They leave their home before dawn every morning for 16 weeks for their 8:00 AM appointment at the hospital. For the four hours that her 12 year old daughter undergoes chemotherapy, Mom will be right there. During those

mornings together, they will read, play games, watch videos on their iPods and talk. Their Monday mornings are anxious times—but precious. For this mother and daughter—this is the Visitation.

Every Tuesday afternoon, after a full day of her own classes, Kristen, a high school senior, heads to the community center. For two hours, she teaches kids to read and tutors kids from city grammar schools in the mysteries of math and the secrets of English grammar and vocabulary. In Kristen's patient explanations and words of encouragement, kids who are at risk begin to believe in their future.

Mike and Tom have been at a war of their own making because of some family squabble they don't remember but can't get past. They've hurt each other and done and said stupid things so the trust is just not there. Now their dad is in hospice care and they are trying to repair their relationship for the good of the family. In every awkward word they speak to each other, in every attempt to move on, in every admission of hurt and anger between the brothers and in forgiving and being forgiven, God is with them. *Emmanuel.*

Why did Mary take that arduous journey to visit her older cousin, Elizabeth? Both women are unexpectedly pregnant, for Elizabeth it is too late in her life and for Mary it is too early. They will support each other, struggle to understand God's plan and be prepared to welcome their inconvenient babies-- who will change the world. In Mary's visit and our own visitations, the Spirit of God is upon us in the healing, comfort and support we can extend to one another in such moments. God calls to humanity in every time and place to say: I am with you every step of the journey. I am with you in every storm. I am with you when the night seems endless. In Mary's child, the inexplicable love of God becomes real for us; the peace and justice of God become possible. That's the good news!