



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



Fourth Sunday of Advent, Cycle C

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The Fourth Sunday of Advent each year honors the mother of the Christ Child, Mary. Icons over the ages depict the “*Theotokos – God Bearer*” Mary in her near-term pregnancy. Today we reflect on Mary’s joyful visit where both Mary and Elizabeth have each *enwombed* within, the lush and fecund future of all humanity: Mary bearing the Christ Child; Elizabeth, John the Baptist.

*When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb
...and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. (Luke 1:41)*

I suggest our reflection this week might focus prominently on the connection between John and Jesus, between the Precursor and the Messiah. John recognizes the presence of his Lord and leaps for joy in his mother's womb. In this moment, the future promised by the prophets of old in-breaks through the dome of the sky where the River of Life will soon pour forth the waters of baptism. In an embarrassment of riches the grace and salvation of the world is manifold, where the angels proclaim, “*Glory to God in the highest!*”

In an act of divine providence, Elizabeth, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, proclaims Mary's greatness, calling her blessed among women. Among the Jewish people, a mother of many children was considered blessed by God, but here the one child is enough to make Mary the most blessed of all.

This week, settle in a quiet place and pray with your favorite icon of Mary bearing the Christ Child. Mine is the icon by William Hart McNichols, “*Our Lady of the New Advent,*” depicted below. I have this icon prominently displayed in my office, were my gaze often settles on its deep advent beauty, marveling at this mystery of the incarnation. May your week, in anticipation of the coming of the Lord, be blessed and glorified!



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A reading from the gospel according to Luke (1:39-45)

Mary set out and went with haste
to a Judean town in the hill country,
where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.
When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting,
the child leaped in her womb.
And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry,

*"Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb.
And why has this happened to me,
that the mother of my Lord comes to me?
For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting,
the child in my womb leaped for joy.
And blessed is she who believed
that there would be a fulfillment
of what was spoken to her by the Lord."*

The Gospel of the Lord.