

## Fourth Week of Advent

A woman went to the Post Office to buy stamps for her Christmas cards. "What denomination?" asked the clerk? "Oh, good Heavens! Have we come to this?" said the woman. "Well, give me 20 Catholic stamps for me and 20 Baptist stamps for my husband."

Dear Friends,

As we are nearing the solemnity of Christmas, it reminds us about our visits to family and friends. The readings today talk about carrying Jesus with us to meet our friends and family. The first reading from the Book of Micah tells us the prophet Micah gives assurance to the Jews that God is faithful to His promises, and that from the unimportant village of Bethlehem He will send them the long-expected ruler.

The second reading, taken from Paul's Letter to the Hebrews, reminds us to be thankful to Jesus Christ who offered the perfect sacrifice of obedience that liberated us from sin.

The Gospel brings more meaning to our liturgy. God's plan is always different. It is seemingly interesting that two insignificant women of the community got in the sight of God. There is a saying, "*He (she) who is on fire cannot sit on a chair.*" Mary, filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit and carrying the newly conceived Jesus, hurried to the mountain country where Elizabeth lived. She thereby conveying the Holy Spirit to her cousin and Elizabeth's unborn child.

The second thing that strikes our mind is that Mary was sensitive to the needs of others, especially Elizabeth. She was so sensitive to the needs of her own son and later to the disciples; so, she became the model of faith. Her sensitivity and commitment brought joy to Elizabeth, John, and later to the disciples and today to the church. We need to rejoice with them because they were the instruments to carry Jesus. Mary became the missionary disciple to carry Jesus to others. They both had an encounter with God. John also had an encounter with Jesus. We read in the Gospel that when he heard the message, the child in her womb leaped for joy.

Christmas is the ideal time for us to be filled with the spirit of Christ, allowing his rebirth within us. Once Christ is reborn in us, He enables us to share His love with all whom we encounter, by offering them humble and committed service, unconditional forgiveness, and compassionate, caring love. Let us take the time to visit others like family and friends during this Christmas season, especially the sick and shut-ins, to bring some inspiration into their lives, and hopefully to bring them closer to God.

We need to bless and encourage the younger generation. Elizabeth demonstrates the responsibility of the older generation to inspire the younger generation. Grandparents, parents, teachers, and leaders have the responsibility of encouraging those around them. By complimenting and encouraging one's spouse, children and friends, let us make them know how valuable they are to us and to God. Let us share the joy with others.

How do you want to share your Joy with others?

When is the last time you visited with relatives?

When did you meet and share with someone in need?

Sharing of our time, energy, things and talents are also virtues of being a missionary. Let us try to do that during this Christmas time.