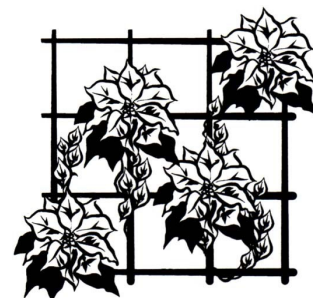


4th Sunday of Advent C

*Blessed is she who believed
that the promise made her by the Lord
would be fulfilled. (Lk 1:44)*



First Reading

Micah 5:1-4

The Lord says this: You (Bethlehem) Ephrathah, the least of the clans of Judah, out of you will be born for me the one who is to rule over Israel; his origin goes back to the distant past, to the days of old. The Lord is therefore going to abandon them till the time when she who is to give birth gives birth. Then the remnant of his brothers will come back to the sons of Israel. He will stand and feed his flock with the power of the Lord, with the majesty of the name of his God. They will live secure, for from then on he will extend his power to the ends of the land. He himself will be peace.

Second Reading

Hebrews 10:5-10

This is what Christ said, on coming into the world: You who wanted no sacrifice or oblation, prepared a body for me. You took no pleasure in holocausts or sacrifices for sin; then I said, just as I was commanded in the scroll of the book, "God, here I am! I am coming to obey your will." Notice that he says first: You did not want what the Law lays down as the things to be offered, that is: the sacrifices, the oblations, the holocausts and the sacrifices for sin, and you took no pleasure in them; and then he says: Here I am! I am coming to obey your will. He is abolishing the first sort to replace it with the second. And this will was for us to be made holy by the offering of his body made once and for all by Jesus Christ.

Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, "Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled".

Meditation

Here is an event which is touching but ordinary: two pregnant women meet. Yet the children borne by these two women will play an extraordinary part in the unfolding of God's plan. In Mary's visitation to Elizabeth, life hastens to meet human hope. Mary's son, the one "whose origin is from of old, from ancient times", incarnates in humanity invisible divinity. Elizabeth's child will bring Israel's waiting to its highest intensity.

"Blessed is she who trusted that the Lord's words to her would be fulfilled!" In Elizabeth's cry, we catch an allusion to the annunciation through which Mary, overshadowed by the Spirit, became the Mother of God. The visitation completes and confirms the angel's message. It bears witness to the dynamism of the Spirit who progressively permeates the protagonists of the infancy narrative. Mary undertakes with fervour the first apostolic journey in order to share her joy with her cousin. Elizabeth humbles herself before her visitor and blesses her among all women. John already leaps for joy, thus inaugurating his role as precursor. These many humble signs reveal that, from the conception of Jesus, the river of life flows out to water the whole earth.

The same gospel event is relived whenever Christians proclaim to each other in simplicity of heart God's presence in their lives, and whenever they celebrate in thanksgiving the wonders that the Lord has done for them.