



Friday of the Third Week of Advent

During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

Introductory Prayer: Lord, help me to settle my mind and my heart. I know that you are present in this prayer . I want to turn aside all distractions. Increase my faith in your action in my life. You are leading me to yourself. Help me to place myself more fully in your hands. Increase my faith so that I will do anything and suffer anything for you. Use me as an instrument of your grace in the lives of those I meet today.

Petition: Lord, help me to follow Mary's example of faith and love and bring you to others this Christmas.

1. Mary, Our Advent Model: Mary is truly the model of how we should be living Advent in preparing for Christ's arrival. God the Father prepared her from the first moment of her conception to be the worthy mother of his Son. Like a faithful daughter of Israel, she had prayed throughout her youth for the coming of the Messiah. When she was a young lady, she discovered that she was part of God's answer to that prayer, but in a way that would have far exceeded any Hebrew maiden's prayers: not only would the Messiah be her son, but her son would also be God. Her "fiat", her wholehearted "yes!" to the Archangel Gabriel, launched the proximate preparation for the birth of Jesus the Messiah. Let us enter into Mary's response of faith, which is a guide for us along our own pilgrimage of faith. Let us listen to the beat of Mary's contemplative heart, so that our Christmas may be as fruitful as that first Christmas.

2. Someone Who Loves Takes Notice of the Details:. No sooner had the Archangel left Mary in Nazareth after announcing her important role in God's incredible plan of salvation than Mary herself made plans to depart. She went with haste to help her elderly kinswoman Elizabeth who was pregnant for the first time. Gabriel had not instructed Mary to go to Elizabeth's aid, nor did he suggest it. Mary's great love was sufficient to cause her to spring into action and embark upon the long sixty-mile journey to Elizabeth's hometown outside Jerusalem. It was In undertaking this challenging and potentially dangerous journey, Mary showed— as she did at the wedding feast in Cana — that someone who loves takes notice of the details. She showed that someone who loves, does whatever possible to lend a helping hand, even at the cost of considerable sacrifice. We can imagine that this was Mary's attitude from her earliest childhood.

3. Be A Missionary — Bring Christ! - By going to Elizabeth's aid, Mary — carrying the tiny Jesus in her womb — became the first missionary,; the first bearer of the Good News that would change all of human history. Mary was able to bring incredible joy to both Elizabeth and John the Baptist in her womb precisely because she was bringing Christ. And Mary was able to burst out with her beautiful Magnificat for the very same reason. To bring joy to others this Christmas, we really have to bring them Christ. He is the greatest gift we could ever bring to someone we love — all the material goods in the world fall flat in comparison. Without sharing Jesus, we are not giving our loved ones anything that is truly lasting. Bring Christ and you bring everything.

Conversation with Christ: Lord Jesus, it is clear that your mother wants me to learn from her example. She inspires me to bring you to others this Christmas season. I know plenty of people who desperately need you in their lives, who need your forgiveness, who hunger for your love and presence, perhaps without even knowing it. I know that my loving relationship with you is never meant to be kept to myself; it is a gift meant to be shared. Your mother's example shows me the way to live Advent well and explicitly challenges me to be a missionary by bringing you to the world.

Resolution: I will share my faith this Christmas season with a friend or relative in need.