

4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent
Micah 5:1-4
Hebrews 10:5-10
Luke 1:39-45

### A. Text and Context

- The couple Elizabeth and Zechariah is already old and they have not been gifted with a child
- In the Jewish culture a couple who has no child is being looked down upon as some kind of a curse
- A child is believed to be a gift from God so that if a woman gives birth to a child she will receive plenty of gifts
- Now everything has changed. Elizabeth is now 6 months pregnant and here comes the very young Mary visiting her cousin Elizabeth
- The second joyful mystery in the holy rosary that we know. The visitation
- The news that Elizabeth is pregnant was announced by the angel Gabriel to Mary during the annunciation so that after she knew of the pregnancy she immediately set out to travel from Nazareth to Judah
- And how far is Judah from Nazareth? Mary has to travel 90 kilometers by distance according to the scholars just to visit Elizabeth
- Travel time with this distance takes more than 7 days and to think the gospel did not mention if Mary has a companion or if she rode a donkey while traveling. A donkey is only for rich people, Mary is poor
- Try to think of Mary's situation when she traveled at that time, a young maiden of about 14 years of age and most of all beautiful
- The risk of her chastity being violated along the way is very great

- She is also pregnant at the same time, and the roads and trails are full of wild animals ready to devour you alive
- Or you can get mugged by robbers and criminals along the way
- With all the dangers of travel Mary continued and she arrived in Judah and when she and Elizabeth met each other the little infant in Elizabeth's womb leaped for joy
- Elizabeth said: Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb

### B. Human Situation

- My brothers and sisters, the visit of Mary to Elizabeth is the first encounter between Jesus and John the Baptist. The encounter between the Messiah and the prophet
- Mary brings Jesus to John. Mary brings her son Jesus to all of us Christians
- That is why Mary plays a very vital role of salvation because Mary brings Jesus to us
- A prophet longs to see the realization of his prophecy. The prophecy was fulfilled through Mary
- Why is it that Elizabeth said to Mary blessed are you among women?
- Because every woman in Palestine at that time waited for so long and they longed to become the mother of the Messiah
- Every woman in Israel longs to become the mother of God as prophesied
- This visit of Mary to Elizabeth reminds us all Christians today that we have a social concern for others. That we have a social obligation to others
- As part of human weakness, we have always fallen and trapped and we give in to the temptations of being apathetic, and callous to the needs of others; because we are so comfortable with our own selves, with the security of our job, and the comfort and safety of our home

- We only begin to care about a certain problem once we are already affected ourselves
- When we become victims ourselves. There, we start to realize that there is a need to exert joint efforts in order to curtail drug addiction and criminality for example
- Look at the United States of America. We remember how the twin towers of the World Trade Center, crumbled to pieces as we saw it with our own eyes brought by television right into our living rooms
- What I mean is that we do not have to wait for the time that we become victims ourselves before we finally work to solve the many problems that we face
- If we get drunk and intoxicated with fortune and success of a good life, then we just close our eyes ready to sleep. We will never see that the others need us
- We will never hear the wailing of children who lost their fathers and mothers in any disaster
- If we only look around, so many people are broken, so many people longed for our love and care
- When I was still a seminarian we had an exposure in an orphanage in Hospicio de San Jose
- When the children see you coming, all the children will rush to you wanting to be carried because they have not experienced being carried by a loving father or mother
- Then how much more if we do more than just a cuddling? Many souls will be happy
- When we are so charitable many stomachs will be filled
- When we work for justice many people will be freed from tyranny and greed
- When somebody is so disillusioned and hopeless but when he/she heard even just a few words of your good advice perhaps you can avert an impending suicide

### C. Challenge

- This is the challenge that the gospel brings us today. God is reminding us that we have a social obligation to fulfill towards our brothers and sisters especially those who are in need
- The gospel today is suggesting us to make a visit to the people who need our help and eventually assist them according to our own capacity, to pay attention to the wailing of those who suffer
- If Mary who is so young and innocent braved all the dangers of a perilous travel just to pay a visit and assist Elizabeth in her pregnancy God is calling us to do the same to others
- Mary feels the need of Elizabeth. It must be very difficult for an old woman to be pregnant and she also knew that Zechariah will be of little help because he is still dumb. Until this time he still cannot talk
- Mary brings joy in her visitation as what the 1<sup>st</sup> reading talks about. The Lord visits his people
- Mary is so sensitive to the needs of others. Let us not be apathetic and callous to the needs of others. Rather, let us take Mary as our model
- And this is not really a very heavy obligation because God does not demand from us to help others beyond our capacity
- He only asks us even with the little that we can do to make the lives of others a little comfortable