

Church of the divine love

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 22, 2024 10:15 AM

HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

Please observe silence

Prayer before worship – on insert

THE WORD OF GOD

Processional Hymn #56, vs. 7 & 8 – **O come, O come, Emmanuel**

Opening Acclamation page 355

Collect for Purity page 355

Gloria (sung)

Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: **Micah 5:2-5a**

Canticle 15: The Song of Mary

Second Lesson: **Hebrews 10:5-10**

Gradual Hymn #

Gospel: **Luke 1:39-45, (46-55)**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze (printed on insert)

The Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form VI page 392

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn #

Doxology (sung)

The Great Thanksgiving:	
Eucharistic Prayer B	page 367
Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal)	page 367
The Lord's Prayer	page 364
The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer	page 337
The Communion of the People	
Communion Hymn #	
Post Communion Prayer	page 365
Prayer for Peace – on insert	
Prayer For the Parish	page 817
Prayer of St. Francis	page 833
Dismissal Hymn #	
Dismissal	

Sermon Sunday December 22nd, 2024

Micah 5:2-5a; Canticle 15; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45, (46-55).

Sisters and brothers in Christ,

“Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”

When I look at the various situations and circumstances of my life, the joys and sorrows, the successes and failures, the hopes and the disappointments, the struggles and the accomplishments, I so want to find hidden within them a fulfillment of something spoken to me by the Lord. I don't think I'm alone in that. I don't think I am all that different from you or anyone else. I think we all want that, even if we don't know it. We want to believe. We want to believe that our life and existence are more than our circumstances. We want to discover a value and meaning that is lasting and not situational. We want to know and experience God is with us. We long for something beyond the circumstances. It's not about denying or ignoring our circumstances. It's about believing through the circumstances rather than in the circumstances. It is a different way of believing than what we are used to.

Most of the time we take the facts of a situation, as we see them, and, using reason, come to a conclusion. That's our usual way of believing. It's characterized by rational thought, deductive analysis, and scientific thinking. We allow the circumstances of our lives to determine or at least strongly influence what we believe about God, the world, others, and our selves. In that regard, tragedy and violence in our nation and world will lead some to believe that evil has overcome good. The hardships of life can cause us to believe we are victims, entitled, and justified in our anger and resentment. Successes and accomplishments can make one believe he or she is blessed, fortunate, more deserving, or better than another. Some whose prayer goes unanswered believe God is absent, not listening, or just doesn't care.

Today, some will hear about a young, unmarried, pregnant girl who claims that she saw and spoke with an angel, that she is a virgin, and that her pregnancy is an act of God, and believe the story is simply not true. After all virginity and pregnancy are mutually exclusive. Logic, reason, and human biology tell us so. Others will believe the story is only symbol or metaphor and, therefore, not real and not true. What if, however, we really believed God is uniquely present and active in the circumstances of our lives, speaking a word? What if we truly believed there would be a fulfillment of the word spoken? What if instead of allowing the circumstances to determine what we believe we allowed our believing to reinterpret the circumstances? In our spiritual walks, we, too, might find ourselves in times of uncertainty. How vital it is to seek out fellow believers, those who encourage and uplift us in our faith! In Elizabeth's response to Mary, we see a profound encouragement. Elizabeth's baby leaps in her womb at the sound of Mary's greeting, a physical manifestation of joy and recognition of the divine present in Mary. She acknowledges all that God has done for her. In our worship, do we prioritize gratitude? When was the last time we reflected on God's goodness in our lives? Mary recognizes her humble state. He has been mindful of the humble state of His servant. This demonstrates that God often chooses what the world sees as insignificant to fulfill His grand purposes. His mercy extends to those who fear Him from generation to generation. Mary's song reflects the eternal nature of God's mercy, reminding us that His actions are not just for a moment but ripple throughout history.

That would be blessed believing, Elizabeth and Mary type of believing. Neither one should be or could be pregnant. One is too old. One is too young. One is barren. One is a virgin. Yet, both are pregnant. Neither Elizabeth nor Mary allowed the circumstances of her life to define who she was or limit who she might become. Believing for them is not so much about what they see but how they see. Each one believed she was more than the circumstances of her life. Elizabeth believed she was more than just a barren, childless, old woman. Mary refused to accept that she was a no-one, another scandalous woman, but believed that she was the mother of the Holy One. Both women saw, hidden within their particular situation, a deeper meaning and a new life. They believed through the circumstances of their lives. Each one trusted that the God of the impossible was somehow in the circumstances reshaping, transforming, and fulfilling her very existence. That's why Elizabeth says, "Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

Blessed, however, doesn't necessarily mean life is easy, we get our way, or we live happily ever after.

That's also true about reversals as well. Look at Mary. She is the one on whom God has looked on with favor. She is the one whom all generations call blessed. And she is also the one whose soul is pierced by a sword. Maybe blessings are sometimes a mixed bag. Maybe to be blessed means that we are awake to and trustful of this unfolding of life that we can't explain, control, or understand. Maybe to be blessed means that we are willing to entrust ourselves to, become a part of, and hold nothing back from, that larger unfolding of life even when it makes no sense, even when we don't know where it will take us. And if that's what it means to be blessed, how might it change the way we see and receive the reversals of life? What if we could look at our reversals and instead of saying, this is good or That is bad, we entrusted ourselves to the unfolding of something larger than the individual circumstances of our lives. Isn't that what Mary and Elizabeth did?

Who is the "she" of whom Elizabeth speaks? To whom are her words directed? Just a few verses earlier Elizabeth said to Mary, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." Now Elizabeth says, "Blessed is she who believed..." It is a subtle but significant shift, from you to she. This is not only about Mary. It is about Elizabeth herself. It is about you and me. It is about anyone who is willing to believe, not in, but through the circumstances of his or her life. Elizabeth is speaking about the womb of humanity, the receptive, creative, and generative parts of our lives. The one who believes conceives and bears the Word of God. There has been a fulfillment of the word spoken and that one declares God's works through the circumstances of his or her life.

It is always easier to reason than it is to really believe. It takes courage, Elizabeth and Mary kind of courage, to not let the circumstances of our life determine our believing. It means setting aside our usual way of thinking and understanding, setting aside what is logical and makes sense, and accepting and entrusting ourselves to a mystery that is bigger than us, our understanding, and even our faith.

That kind of believing cannot be limited by what is reasonable, explainable, or even acceptable. It trusts that in every moment of every circumstance the word of God is being fulfilled. That kind of believing impregnates our lives and world with hope, possibilities, and expectations beyond what is factually true, historically accurate, and objectively verifiable. That kind of believing means our life and world are larger than the circumstances in which we live. The bigger our life and world are, the more room we offer God. That kind of believing blesses and in the moment of blessing our soul magnifies the Lord and our spirit rejoices in God our savior. God was at work within these two women changing them not their circumstances. So, it is for each one of us. **Amen.**

All baptized Christians, regardless of age, are welcome to receive communion in the Episcopal Church.

4 ADVENT

10:15 AM

HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS

MONDAY	8:30 PM	AA MEETING
TUESDAY – CHRISTMAS EVE	10:30 PM	CAROL SINGING
	11:00 PM	MIDNIGHT CHRISTMAS SERVICE
		HOLY EUCHARIST,RITE II
WEDNESDAY-CHRISTMAS DAY	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST,RITE II
	7:00 PM	AL-ANON MEETING
THURSDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP
	8:30 PM	AA MEETING
SATURDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP
1 CHRISTMAS	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II
		COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS

	Today	Next Week
Eucharistic Minister	Dana Kenn	Dana Kenn
Coffee	Erika Febres	Nolans

SUPPORT THE FOOD PANTRY – DROP-OFF IN THE KITCHEN

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Loving God, comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit. Give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation. Especially we remember before you:

Sister Eddie	Betty Curley	Jess
Bob Curley	Steve Curley	Art
Chris Dickson	John Rocco	Deb P.
John Mulligan	Marjorie Guerrier	Lynette
Manetta Family	Robert Hosey	Ryan
Christopher	Bernie Walther	Celeste
Beverly Noel	Phil Ryder	Warren
Anthony Paribello	Barbara Curran	Del
Donna A.	Kate Jones	Aidan
Sally & Roger	Sophia	Ciara
Mary & Family	Wendy	Jan
Nathan Treadwell	Gladys Hadija	Vincent
Michael & Family	Matthew Treasure	Mo
Michelle & Baby	Joseph	Annie
Jerry& Family		

All people and countries suffering from violence, hatred and natural disaster.

The homeless and food insecure.

Help us speak words of encouragement and offer deeds of kindness to them.

Bring us with them, into the unending joy of your kingdom. Amen.

To add or make changes to prayer list during the week, email

Janet Croft at jmc220@optonline.net.

Prayer before Worship

Almighty God, who pours out on all who desire it, the spirit of grace. Deliver us, when we draw near to you, from coldness of heart, and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn to be sung during the consecration:

Father I adore you,
Lay my life before you,
How I love you.

Repeat twice with second verse starting with Jesus
and third verse starting with Spirit.

Prayer for Peace

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominions and glory, now and for ever. Amen

