

December 23, 2018 4th Sunday of Advent

Meet Him with joy!

Micah 5:1-4

Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19

Hebrews 10:5-10

Luke 1:39-45

In the first reading Bethlehem is prophesied to be the place from which the Messiah will come. His greatness shall reach the ends of the earth and he will shepherd his flock by the strength of the Lord. Mentioning "she will give birth" and a silence about the father was interpreted as an indication of the virginal conception of the coming Messiah.

The Psalmist pleads with the Lord of Hosts to save the people of Israel. His prayer seeks new life and protection from enemies who seek to destroy Israel and in return promises to continually call upon his name. Repentance is what they pledge and pray that God will never turn away from them again.

In the second reading Paul reminds us that Jesus came to do the will of the Father. We are consecrated through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. The law, the old covenant, is displaced by Christ's offering.



In the Gospel Mary travels to visit Elizabeth who is now filled with the Holy Spirit. Once Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit, this same Spirit can become active in others, in Elizabeth, in John while he is still in the womb. Upon Mary's greeting the baby in Elizabeth leaped for joy. Mary is blessed because she believed that what was spoken to her by the Lord would be fulfilled.

The will of the Father is
The work of the Son
Guided by the Holy Spirit.

The theme of our readings emphasizes that Jesus came to us as the Word made flesh, whose origin is from of old. Mary trusted in the Lord's words, and we are to do likewise. John the Baptist, still in Elizabeth's womb, is the first person to have experienced the joy of Christ's coming and joy is the infallible sign of God's presence.

He Must Increase!

A **first step** in opening ourselves to Jesus is to relinquish our ways of imagining and thinking of how God is and how God acts. God cannot be defined, is not simply an abstraction; God often reveals to us his holiness in unexpected ways; God was, God is, God always will be!

A **second step** is to meditate upon the words of John (3:30) when he says, "He must increase and I must decrease." We allow Jesus to penetrate our very being and we grow in that way.

A **third way** is to quiet ourselves in order to hear God's whispers. This requires us to enter deep silence and solitude and set aside special times, day or night, to accomplish this.



The **Father** helps us in the first step, the **Son** in the second, and the **Holy Spirit** in the third.

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