

Homily for 4th Sunday of Advent:

John the Baptist had figured largely in the past two Sundays. Today, we read about him again in an earlier event. While still in the womb of Elizabeth, we hear that he did not just move, he jumped.

Bishop Robert Barron a few years ago reflected on the how in this instance John recalls King David. David, when bringing the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem, danced before the Lord. The Ark of the Covenant was constructed to be the place where God's glorious presence would be located. John "leapt for joy" in the presence of Mary. Mary is the Ark of the New Covenant - which is Jesus, who is God's glory in the Flesh.

Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, understood this as Leaping for Joy in the presence of His savior who is in the womb of Mary. This cousin of Jesus, even while still in his mother's womb, was fulfilling his role of announcing the Messiah.

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This is the Fourth Sunday of Advent, and the last Sunday before Christmas. In these final days anticipating the Birthday of Our Lord and Savior, we remember this event which was so close to that original Birthday.

Mary, upon hearing that she is to be the Mother of the Messiah, finds herself going to be with Elizabeth. No doubt it was partly to help her elderly relative during the final three months before John's birth.

But we are told it was much more. Our Blessed Mother is already bringing Christ to others. This is a time of revelation and joy to everyone. This very small moment – two women, sharing with each other God's plan coming together, with them carrying a special role in that plan. And that plan included the two others who were present in this encounter.

Mary is carrying He who is the Plan – He who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

John is Herald. Mary is Herald. Elizabeth is the recipient of this Good News. But she, too, immediately sings out joyfully the Good News.

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My brothers and Sisters, you know where I am going with this. I remind everyone here that all us disciples find our fulfillment in being heralds of the Good News of Jesus Christ. This time of year it seems a bit easier to let people know why we are filled with hope. We carry the message of God's love in the most intriguing story of all time. And that story is offered in the strength of its simplicity. God Loves us so much He became one of us.

This news has changed our lives, and is a part of us. Let us both now, and also beyond this season of Hope, always to be like Mary, and Elizabeth, and John. Let us always be carrying and leaping and singing the wonder of God-made-Flesh for us and for all.

Like Mary and Martha at that moment, let us enjoy the time now. The world so much desires this joy. May our prayers be that everyone in the world know the source of this joy, and seek to let Christ into their lives.

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The truths of the faith are so large and deep, that our expressions of them always multiply. The Truth of the Incarnation finds this Advent and the Coming Christmas Seasons to be examples of that. There is always a new tradition, a new song to be sung, and a new cookie to be baked, a new production to attend.

In order to prepare our hearts, perhaps, in this midst of all this, each of us can decide one thing we don't have to do in the next week. One thing we can take off our to-do list.

And then spend that energy and time resting and thinking about the source of that tradition and song and treat and event. That source is Christ. Think on Him.

And maybe we can also think how the words of the gospel can be said of us today, as it was said by Elizabeth of Mary, "Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."