

## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent

### Theme: Holy Mother Mary's Faith, Charity, and Obedience Is a Great Model for Us All

**W**ith the celebration of the 4<sup>th</sup> Week of Advent, we have come to the end of our Advent season for 2024. God willing, we will celebrate Christmas on Wednesday, December 25.

Holy Mother Mary's faith, charity, and obedience in God, for me, is the main theme of this 4<sup>th</sup> Week of Advent. Everyone has a role model he/she admires. As many of you know by now, as a child growing up in my native country, Ghana, my parents, especially my grandma of a blessed memory, introduced me to holy Mother Mary as a great role model in our Catholic family. I developed a great love and admiration of holy Mother Mary from my childhood until today. Mary, a human being like us, experienced the ups and downs of human life. But because of her strong, faith, love, and obedience to God's will, she won the admiration of God. She became a great model of faith, love, and obedience to us all. No wonder, her cousin, Elizabeth, called her "Blessed among women and blessed is the fruit of her womb."

In today's Gospel reading, Luke tells us when Mary heard the good news that she would be the mother of Jesus, the Son of God, she went up to visit her cousin Elizabeth who was six months pregnant with John the Baptist. Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, praised Mary in a loud voice, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." St. Luke tells us that even the infant, John the Baptist in Elizabeth's womb, leapt for joy. Elizabeth praises her cousin Mary and highlights the uniqueness of the child she has conceived. We see these two mothers-to-be both praising God who is active in their lives. Yes, great things happen to those who live their faith in God well.

Fellow parishioners, do you remember the last time you praised your sibling, family, friend, or co-worker for his /her sharing 'good news' with you? Were you happy or sad with his/her accomplishments?

The early Christians saw the prophecy of Micah fulfilled in Jesus. Micah prophesied about the same time as the prophet Isaiah. Prophet Micah, unlike Isaiah who came from the upper class in society, Micah was a rural farmer, who like many true prophets of God, was also very sensitive and concerned about the plight of the poor and needy in his community. He shows us the God who is loving and compassionate for justice, and faithfulness to his covenant with Israel. Micah like other true prophets in Israel assured his people that God would certainly deliver them through a king in Davidic line.

Mary became the woman who birthed the Messiah, an anointed ruler who came from a descendant of King David as prophesied by the prophets in Israel.

The author of the second reading draws our attention to the main mission of Jesus Christ, namely, to do the will of God, his heavenly Father: "I come to do your will." He did so by not offering the sacrifice according to the Old Law (animal sacrifices) but to do the will of his heavenly Father. That is, Jesus taught, preached, and lived the unconditional love his heavenly Father taught him and died on the cross to emphasize his tremendous love for us all. Theologians called Jesus the Sacrificial victim. He used his very self, not an animal, to offer a sacrifice on our behalf to his heavenly Father.

My dear parishioners, if we all follow the footsteps of Mother Mary in her faith, love, and obedience to God, we will truly find meaning and purpose in our Christian lives. Yes, Mary is truly the first disciples of her Son, Jesus Christ. That explains why the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Church states: "Mary devoted herself as a handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son."

Let us continue to ask holy Mother Mary and her beloved husband St. Joseph to pray for us to be faithful and obedient to God's will in our daily life. Amen!