Fourth Sunday of Advent — December 19, 2021

From the Desk of Fr. Leo

This weekend's Gospel centers around two expectant mothers, Mary and Elizabeth. The episode took place several months before the birth of Jesus. When Mary learned that her elderly cousin had conceived, she felt that it was her duty to visit the older woman and offer her help. When Mary arrived, Elizabeth greeted her with these words, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb," words that have come to form part of the prayer "Hail Mary."

Elizabeth's greeting is not surprising. She herself had an exquisite appreciation of motherhood. For many years of her life with her husband, Zechariah, she had been without a child. Then in her old age by the special power of God she conceived John the Baptist. Her many years of patient waiting made her value all the more the mysterious sacredness of begetting a child. She had an even greater sense of sacredness and mystery when she realized how God's special power had been at work.

And so, when she saw Mary, all of her own awareness, her own appreciation, overflowed in her exuberant greeting. If every new life is sacred, how much more sacred was the life Mary was carrying in her womb. If God's power had been at work in Elizabeth's conceiving of John, how much greater was God's power at work in Mary's conceiving of Jesus. No wonder, then that Elizabeth exclaimed, "But who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

In just a few days, we will celebrate the birth of Christ. We will try to renew all our spirit of awe and wonder at the mysterious sacredness of the birth of Jesus. The birth of Jesus in all of its magnificent reality is beyond our ability to comprehend. It is something we simply cannot grasp. And we can ask, "Who are we that the Lord himself should come to us in human flesh like our own?"

In the Preface of the Mass, we hear these words, "In his love he has filled us with joy as we prepare to celebrate his birth, so that when he comes, he may find us watching in prayer, our hearts filled with wonder and praise." Indeed, our hearts should be filled with wonder when we think about the meaning of Christmas. "Wonder:" means astonishment, even surprise. And it is astonishing that the God who made the universe, who controls the movement of the stars and planets, and shapes the destiny of all of humankind, became a tiny infant. It is surprising that the all-powerful, all-knowing God who holds all life in his hand, went through the whole mysterious process of conception and birth. Astonishing, surprising – and true.

And because of this, our hearts should be filled not only with wonder, but also with praise. On Christmas day we will sing, "Glory to God in the highest." God is worthy of our praise and glory. What a magnificent thing he has done in sending His Son into our world to be our Savior.

Fr. Leo Alban Asuncion

Mass Intentions for the Week

Tues.	**December 21**	**11:00AM**
Jennifer Sebastian †		Jenny
Wed.	**December 22**	**11:00AM**
Simeon Rojo †		Imelda & Dolly
Thur.	**December 23**	**11:00AM**
Thanksgiving		Ed & Mae
Fri.	**December 24**	**4:30PM, 10:00PM**
People of the Parish		
Sat.	**December 25**	**9:00AM**
People of the Parish		
Port Costa		**11:00AM**
People of the Parish		
Sun.	**December 26**	**9:00AM**
Bernas Family (Thanksgiving)		
Port Costa		**11:00AM**
People of the Parish		

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