

Blessed Are You Who Believe

Intro. Who do we call, text or visit when we have news - good *or* bad? Depending on our situation, it might be family or not. It is usually someone we can trust to listen without judgment; someone whose advice we value; someone with whom we feel safe.

Who could *Mary* talk to about the amazing news she received? *Nobody* would believe her. The angel gave her the answer: her cousin Elizabeth was expecting a miracle child also. She was the only one who could understand what Mary was experiencing.

I. “Luke writes “Mary traveled to the hill country *in haste*.” I have always liked that phrase because if something like that happened to me, I would be on the first bus to see for myself and know it was really true. Traveling was a difficult and dangerous thing in those days. We must assume Mary did not go

alone. There would have to be trusted friends to go with her. Maybe even her parents. Seeing the miracle at Elizabeth’s house would certainly help Mary explain what was happening. What a meeting that must have been! For Mary, fear; for Elizabeth, total joy! Elizabeth grinning, with her arms outstretched, her pregnancy showing, welcoming Mary. Mary enfolded in Elizabeth’s arms, crying for joy. It was all true what the angel told her. What relief.

The journey Mary began “in haste” was just the first of many. About to give birth, she soon had to travel to Bethlehem. With a new-born baby, she with Joseph became a refugee in Egypt to escape persecution by Herod. After several years, Mary returned to her town of Nazareth with a young child her relatives had never seen. Even then she made

several pilgrimages to the temple in Jerusalem.

After her son left home to start his ministry, scripture tells us she often traveled to see him. Her most difficult journey must have been to Jerusalem to witness her son's suffering and death. What started out as a quick journey to the hill country of Judea, became for her a lifetime of one journey after another.

Concl. That is not much different from our life. We started out in one place, physically and spiritually, and find ourselves led to other places. Faith is a journey with God. None is easy. We encounter difficulties and detours and changes in plan. We also find new friends who become family when we are away from our home. We discover new ways of doing things. Signs along the way are important to strengthen and feed our faith. Both

Elizabeth and Mary were given incredible prophecies about their children that changed their lives. And God gave them to each other. No cousins could be ever as *close*; no women as *strong* as they. God gives us people like that in *our* lives too; people who share their faith with us and we with them. It is how we have the courage to continue our journey to God. What Elizabeth said about Mary, “How blessed is the woman who has believed, because the things said to her by the Lord will be fulfilled,” might be said about us during our journey of life and especially at the end of that journey. **We are blessed if we have someone like Elizabeth with whom to share our journey.**

Fr. Michael Pendergraft

Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 19, 2021