

FR. PETER'S HOMILY

Have you ever given a hug to a pregnant woman?

It's a beautiful experience.

I know that when my not-so-small belly rubs up against a woman's life-filled womb it's a moment of awe and wonder.

To be so close to a pre-born baby makes one ponder the amazing miracle of God's plan for the marvel of birth.

Today's Gospel invites us to envision the meeting of two pregnant women.

Just imagine the beauty of the moment when two fruitful wombs brush up against each other.

And now consider that these two women have been specially chosen by God to play key roles in salvation history:

Mary, the humble virgin, full of grace and bearer of God's own Son;

And Elizabeth, the barren womb made fertile with the last and greatest of the prophets, John the Baptist.

Elizabeth and her son are filled with the Holy Spirit at the approach of the Word made flesh, and John leaps in his mother's womb for joy because the Savior has come to earth.

As John recognizes the presence of the Messiah, so Elizabeth declares to Mary:

"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb."

Mary is blessed because she "believed that what was spoken to [her] by the Lord would be fulfilled."

Mary, the woman of faith, has become the "ark of the new covenant," bearing within her the fulfillment of every promise God has ever made.

Elizabeth sums up the joy which sums up 2,000 years of waiting: "And how does this happen to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

John the Baptist is filled with amazement and dances in his mother's womb.

And in the passage that follows in Luke's Gospel, Mary will break out into awe-filled praise of the mighty deeds of God in her song, the Magnificat.

And what of Jesus? What is his response?

The Letter to the Hebrews tells us:

"When Christ came into the world he said: 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me ... Behold, I come to do your will, O God.'"

Jesus' response is his total self-gift in obedience to the Father and out of love for us.

In the heart of the Trinity the decision was made that God would become human so that human beings could become divine.

We remember this decision during every Mass when a drop of water is added to the wine in the chalice during the preparation of the gifts:

While doing so, the priest or deacon prays: "By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity."

God comes to dwell in us! What an amazing miracle! What a source for awe and joy!

Little as we are, like the small town of Bethlehem, God chooses to be born in us through the power of the Holy Spirit and the gift of the Eucharist.

In order to recognize and truly appreciate this divine visitation we need to spend time in prayer contemplating the wonder of this mystery

We have spent these days of Advent preparing the way of the Lord. Our great guest is knocking at the door of our life.

Let us welcome him into our hearts and into the heart of our homes with joy and thankfulness and praise!