

Fourth Sunday of Advent, C, 2021

Two brothers worked together on the family farm. One was unmarried and the other married with children. They shared equally all they had – produce and profit. One day the **single brother** thought, “It’s not right that we share equally, AFTER ALL, I’m alone by myself and my needs are simple, BUT my poor brother has a wife and all those children.” So he snuck across the field between their houses and dumped a sack of grain into his brother’s bin.

His brother had the same thought, EXCEPT he thought “it’s not right we should share every thing equally. AFTER ALL, I’m a married man and have my wife and children to look after me for the years to come. So he snuck across the field and dumped a sack of grain into his brother’s bin.

Both were puzzled why their supply did not dwindle for years. UNTIL ONE NIGHT in the middle of the field they met. In the dark they bumped into each other. Though startled, it dawned on them what had happened and they laughed and embraced. The dark sky lit up and a voice from heaven spoke, “Here at last is the place where I will build my Temple. For where brothers meet in love, there my Presence shall dwell.”

Sr. Mary McGlone suggests that the theme of this week’s scripture is how God works through the little ones, the ones most people don’t notice: Like Micah, the minor prophet who tells Israel that just as their greatest king (David) emerged from obscurity, God’s future plans will come about through people equally unnoticed. AND like the author of Hebrews quotes Christ praying: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me.”

That quote transfers the most important of religious activities OUT of the temple and INTO the streets where all are invited to consecrate their own body and activity to fulfill God’s will.

In today’s gospel, two women meet, Mary and Elizabeth, both pregnant with the future God was preparing. Representing the era when Christianity emerged from its Jewish roots: the young woman goes in joyful haste to meet her elder who receives her with equal joy. Zechariah, the one man involved, was a minor official among the 18,000 priests in Palestine at the time these events happened. And he could only serve in deferential silence.

Elizabeth welcomes Mary with a delight that could only be expressed in song, “Blessed are you!” Then, celebrating the grace they shared, she sang, “Blessed are you who believed!” In all humility, as the elder ceding to the new, Elizabeth declared that the miraculous child in her womb was secondary to the one Mary bore. Elizabeth became the first to proclaim faith in Jesus, calling him “my Lord” even before he was born. With this, Luke depicted his interpretation of the emergence of the Christian era from God’s historical relationship with Israel.

Luke paints a vivid picture of women giving life to the good news in the presence of a silenced priesthood. 2 woman kinfolk meet: there is God. Two brothers meet: there is God. Time for us to visit and meet God.

