

## We Can Only Imagine

4<sup>th</sup> Week of Advent – Luke 1:30-45

Determination seems to be the overarching intention of Mary as she **“set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town in Judah...”** Something is propelling her forward. She is on a mission and that mission is the Good News of Jesus’ impending birth. One can only imagine the scene as she traveled some distance, short or long, toward the one person who she knew would rejoice in her message of new life.

Did Mary travel alone, did she catch a ride with a small group of relatives, did she walk or did she ride in a hand-pulled cart? We don’t know. We can only imagine this young girl, dressed in the traditional long robes and headdress, maneuvering her way, some distance, toward Elizabeth who embraced Mary, giving her the acceptance and affirmation that Mary needed at that moment in time.

Was the day warm or was it cold? What did Mary see along the way? Were there shepherds tending flocks along her route? Did she cut through the hillsides of Judah with ease or was the journey more treacherous than we know? Was her trip a steady uphill climb or did she travel along one of the few ancient roads that may have lead one out and away from her small hometown? Was she afraid or in fear of the possible stoning she would incur if her pregnancy was known. We don’t know any of the details from the few words written this week by St. Luke. We can only imagine this beautiful and simplistic scene of the strong inner strength and determination that was encapsulated in this girl.


What we do know is that Mary, now full of the Holy Spirit, proceeded to the home of Zechariah where she greeted her cousin Elizabeth. **“When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.”** This scene is rich with theological notes. John the Baptist’s inaugural encounter with the Holy Spirit is a foreshadowing of John’s own life. He announces to his mother the presence of the Christ with a leap of joy within her womb. His mission of proclaiming Christ, to all, is set in motion.

On her part, Elizabeth is part of this mission. She receives pregnant Mary with joy and acceptance. Mary’s very presence has announced to Elizabeth, through the action of the Holy Spirit, that the Good News of Jesus is here to stay. The world is now different because of the great thing God has done through Mary.

Elizabeth affirms that Mary’s acceptance of God’s plan has placed Mary in a place of honor. **“...Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.”**

We might not have the details of this story, but the power and proclamation of the story is abounding in rich, theological truth. Mary has taken on the role of Jesus’ mother. She will bear into the world its Savior. We can only imagine her joy. On our part, we are called to do the very thing Mary has done. We are called, this Christmas, to once again, welcome Jesus into our very being. May the Virgin Mother help us in this task!

Happy Advent!

  
Sue Schettler