

4th Sunday of Advent "C" 2009

I. The hill country of Judea, the setting for today's gospel, is the last place you would expect a prophecy to be fulfilled or a miracle revealed. Even today, it is a "backwater" of bare hilltops rising from unforgiving valleys. Not the kind of place you'd expect to discover God. But as a modern spiritual writer has said "No matter where we walk we'll find God has been there before us. God's Name is written everywhere if we have eyes to see it." God to the place called "Barren"; stand in the place called "Empty" and you will find God there.

II. Elizabeth knew well about the place called "barren and empty". For most of her life she had been an object of pity, a target for scorn. But one day in the land of high plateaus and rugged valleys the emptiness was filled. One day two surprising babies met and danced in their mother's wombs to the beat of their singing hearts. It was an extraordinary moment. Mary at the beginning of her life; Elizabeth edging toward its end.

III. Elizabeth carried the herald of the Lord, the last of the Old Testament prophets. She knew the history of her people-the ark of the covenant holding the commandments of Moses, the very Word of God in stone and the manna which fed God's chosen people in the desert. Now Elizabeth finds the New Ark, not made of wood or stone, but in the form of a girl who carries the Word of God made flesh; the very Bread of life.

IV. "Who am I that the Mother of the my Lord should come to me. Blessed is she who has believed what the Lord said to her will be accomplished". She is a reminder that God is with us no matter how barren or forsaken we might feel. Elizabeth shows each of how to stand unafraid in the place called "empty"-be it unemployment, failing health, or a failing marriage-and wait for the coming of the Lord. No matte where we walk, we find that God has been there. For God's Name is written everywhere.