

Daily Reflections

ADVENT

The Divine Intervention



December 21, 2016

Scripture

Luke 1:39-45

Mary set out in those days
and traveled to the hill country in haste
to a town of Judah,
where she entered the house of Zechariah
and greeted 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,
"Most blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

And how does this happen to me,
that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears,
the infant in my womb leaped for joy.

Blessed are you who believed
that what was spoken to you by the Lord
would be fulfilled."

Our Scripture Reflection

The beating of a young woman's heart due to shock and excitement is what fueled Mary's fast paced journey through the treacherous hill country of Judea. She had to tell someone who would believe her astonishing news and her cousin Elizabeth was just the person. Elizabeth knew Mary so well that she had no reservations in saying to her, "Blessed are you who believed." Wouldn't it be wonderful if our family and friends knew us for our "Blessedness"?

Food for your Journey

It happened in a large church in New York City where I grew up. During an annual Nativity pageant, the church was especially full. Hushed in darkness, the congregation watched the lighting of the candles. Toward the back, I sat, one timid little girl, with my family. Newly moved to the city after a family separation and trauma, my life had settled down, but I was still overwhelmed and homesick for my grandparents and familiar friends. That night, however, caught up in awe as organ music rolled out from balcony to rafters, I heard a familiar story I loved, and was transported to another time and place. Down the aisle swept a colorful procession as the lights went up, revealing the magnificent manger scene. Travelers, bearded shepherds and finally the three kings bearing gifts advanced majestically. Before anyone knew it, I found myself following them.

The journey down that long aisle was an early spiritual pilgrimage for me, yet it felt like a kind of homecoming. When I reached the manger scene, there were a sleepy donkey, real sheep, and Mary and Joseph beneath an angel with outstretched wings. Above all, there was a light in the manger, enfolding us in its glow. Kneeling in front of it, I had a sense of exaltation, of self-offering as real as any I have ever known since. This was real to me, and I was there. Of course, it didn't last long. I was lifted to my feet by an usher and carried down the aisle, back to my embarrassed family, and the pageant swept on. I was vaguely aware of subdued smiles, and my parents' whispered scolding didn't matter. My discovery was my own, and I had something now that no one could ever take from me. I had been to Bethlehem. I had seen it all for the first time and I would never forget it.

-- Anita Wheatcroft, "How Far to Bethlehem," *Fellowship in Prayer*, 47, December 1996, 37-38.

Prayer from the Heart

Dear Jesus, During this holy season, help me to desire nothing more than to be closer to You. Amen.