

## Homily of Fourth Sunday of Advent Year C, 2021

Micah 5:1-4; Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45

The last purple candle is lit today, the fourth Sunday of Advent. The candle is called Candle of Love. Lighting the candle is our prayer that love may conquer hate and animosity. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. preached, "Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

Rev. John Guun writes: "Of all the dark passions that smite the human soul, hate is the darkest. If you hate another, it hurts you more than the one you hate. Hate will make you nervous, restless, apprehensive .... Hate is like a cancer; it will eat your heart out."

Even when people refuse our love, or keep hating and hurting us despite our effort to reconciliation and peace, Jesus advises us to pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:45). St. Paul puts it this way, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head. Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good" (Romans 12:20-21). In a way, the "burning coals" is the "cancer" that eats the heart of the person that rejects peace, love, and reconciliation.

As we are approaching the celebration of Christmas, the action of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as we read in today's gospel, helps us to reflect on our relationship with one another and on our spiritual journey.

The angel said to Mary, "And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God" (Luke 1:37-37). The gospel says, "Mary sets out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth" (Luke 1:39).

Mary set out, in haste, to visit Elizabeth. She was not directed by the angel to go over and help Elizabeth. She was not sent for by Elizabeth. In her heart of compassion, she reasoned that her elderly pregnant relative needed help, and she set out in haste to help. She stayed with Elizabeth for three months. Mary, probably, stayed with Elizabeth until Elizabeth gave birth to John the Baptist. Mary's thoughtfulness and generous response are a challenge to our life of procrastination, meanness, negligence, and lack of compassion and response to matters concerning other people.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped for joy in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Mary's presence filled Zechariah's house with joy and the Holy Spirit. The radiation of joy and the Holy Spirit from Mary's presence is a challenge to the times we inflict pains and sadness to others. God uses us as channels of joy. The Evil One uses us as tools of pain and sadness. Mary challenges us to do works of charity this Christmas season that brings joy to someone or to a family.

Elizabeth exclaimed, "How does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43). The angel had said to Mary, "You have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most-High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:30-33). Knowing this about herself, she was not proud. She humbled herself to visit and serve Elizabeth. Mary's humility is a challenge to our pride and arrogance.

Elizabeth said to Mary, "Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled" (Luke 1:45). Although, Mary was troubled when the angel visited her, after her interaction with the angel, Mary believed the angel and said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). Mary abandoning her plans and will, and her 'selfless yes' to God's plan and will are a challenge to our selfishness and self-wildness.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary intercede for us, that through the graces of the Advent season, love, peace, and joy may rise in our hearts and flush out bias, sadness, pride, arrogance, selfishness, meanness, self-wildness, and hate. Amen.

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