

The 4th Sunday of AdventDec. 22/23

(Luke 3:10-18)

What a great gospel reading as we celebrate these wonderful Holy days of the mystery of the Incarnation. The extraordinary mystery that 'Our God' Freely chose to become 'One like us' in all things but sin. We have talked about that great mystery all of these past 3 weeks of Advent. It is an almost Unfathomable mystery for us ! It is only possible for us to try and fathom that mystery if God Himself gives us the Gift of Faith to try and wrestle with such a reality.

In all honesty, I invite you to take a very serious look at that fact The whole world stops everything on that day to acknowledge that Christ was born as one like us.

Why even world wars have stopped to observe 'this day' Why is it only for a dayIs that the welcome we give to our SaviorOne day to welcome Him.... and then it is back to our own affairs, our own business !

It was called the Christmas 'The Christmas Truce' of 1914. Starting on Christmas Eve, many German and British troops sang Christmas carols to each other across the lines. At first light of dawn on Christmas Day, some German soldiers emerged from their trenches and approached the Allied lines across no-man's-land, calling out "Merry Christmas" in their enemies' native tongues. At first, the Allied soldiers feared it was a trick, but seeing the Germans unarmed they climbed out of their trenches and

shook hands with the enemy soldiers. The men exchanged presents of cigarettes and plum puddings and sang carols and songs. There was even a documented case of soldiers from opposing sides playing a good-natured game of soccer". Some soldiers used this short-lived ceasefire for a more somber task; the retrieval of the bodies of fellow combatants who had fallen within the no-man's land between the lines.

This is recorded in the Annals of our History. Wow, how AwesomeAbsolutely extraordinary! What extraordinary figures of faith they must have been those men who first came out of their trenches, unarmed, singing the Carols of their Faith..... knowing that the others (their enemies) held the same beliefs, and sang the same songs. Why could such faith not be sustained ?

After Christmas Day and the revelry the soldiers were ordered back to their bunkers and the fighting resumed !

Hard to believe really ! Yes ? ... It is hard to believe, you share moments of gratitude, and generosity, and freedom, and exchange of gifts, and it is as if 'His Peace reigns in the world for those few moments" Yes it seems hard to believe indeed.

Yet the harsh truth remainsthat this same pattern of behavior continues every day in our world. People get together for revelry, and friendship, and socialization, and enjoy the gatheringand then we avert to another form of behavior that is almost incomparable to the friendship.

Surely this has got to be the greatest sadness of our world today WE were created By Love, In Love, and For Love, and every individual is capable of Love But why do we revert to such sad behavior ? Is Love insufficient ? Is love not Enough ? What is our core issue ? I would like for you to reflect on that throughout this coming week !

Now I would like to introduce you to two powerful witnesses in the gospel. Mary and Elizabeth what great ladies there is a whole lot to be learned from these two wonderful and Holy ladies.

We live in a culture where there is a good share of talking about Jesus questions about : Have you met Jesus ? Have you found Jesus ? (As if he had been lost or something) Have you accepted Jesus ? Now they are good questions and helpful questionsbut all of the talk only gets us so far.

If one has Accepted Jesus, then new and powerful experiences are going to slowly show forth in their lives ... In other words there will be 'Visible Fruits' in the life of that person. They will be less self-absorbed, they will be much more 'other oriented' than before, they will be concerned with the needs and the life of the other, even more so than self. They will be far less quick to judge others, blame others, and they will not be hasty to speak badly of another, they will be much more prone to giving a helping hand, rather than kicking one who is already down !

The FRUITS, in the life of one who has really accepted Jesus will become more and more clear, and evident, to those around them.

I would like to point to the Gospel as the real evidence : Mary, has accepted Jesus, the angel appeared to her and told her : “You will conceive a Son and give Him the name Jesus”. How will this be she asked the angel ? The Holy Spirit of God will accomplish this in you ! Is it not the very same for each one of us The Holy Spirit will accomplish this same mission in us ...If we ask .. and if we but let Him !

Notice the FRUITS in Mary’s life after she had accepted ... A lesser woman might have said : Stay back from me I am about to give birth to Jesus ! Not Mary..... Mary was full steam ahead her concern for the other ... Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

What a delightful reunion for the cousins ! Wow notice the depth of their conversation not concerned about what their neighbors were doing or failing to do a heart to heart conversation A conversation of Faith Faith in what god is doing in their lives How beautiful is that ! How many of those conversations do you have in the course of a week ? Conversations about what god is doing in your life ? Would they not be much more beneficial than some of the conversations in my week ? But in order for that to happen God has got to be working

in my lifeotherwise I don't have anything to share in that department !

I absolutely love Elizabeth's final declaration after their intimate conversation : "Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled" Wow what a compliment !

Could this be said of you or me :
Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled !
That's the question I would like for you to wrestle with throughout this coming week Yes homework !

— Fr. Gerry Hurley