

Luke refers to Zechariah, Elizabeth and Mary - presenting two elderly people and a young woman as key players in the fulfilling of God's dream.

7. Closing Prayer

A poem of thanksgiving for the Visitation

Here is a meeting made of hidden joys
of lightnings cloistered in a narrow place
From quiet hearts the sudden flame of praise
and in the womb the quickening kick of grace.

Two women on the very edge of things
unnoticed and unknown to men of power
but in their flesh the hidden Spirit sings
and in their lives the buds of blessing flower,
and Mary stands with all we call 'too young',
Elizabeth with all called 'past their prime'
They sing today for all the great unsung
women who turned eternity to time
favoured of heaven, outcast on the earth:
prophets who bring the best to birth

Malcolm Guite

End your time together with a favourite carol.



Protea

A genus of South African flowering plants, also called sugarbushes. Found also in the Golan Heights and Mediterranean countries.
(Afrikaans:suikerbos)

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Making Space for Change
Fourth Sunday of Advent 2021

1. Welcome and opening prayer

May the Spirit touch our lives
May we open ourselves to God's breathing
May we honour the flame of love
that burns inside us.

May our voices this day
be voices of encouragement
May our lives be an answer to someone's
prayer
May we own grateful hearts.

May we have enough joy to give us hope
Enough pain to make us wise
May there be no room in our hearts for
hatred
May we search every day for peace

When we look into the window of our souls
May we see the face of God.
May the lamps of our lives shine on all
we meet this day.
May our lives become a song for the Beloved.

Adapted from Seven Sacred Pauses- Macrina Wiederkehr

2. Texts

Gospel text: Luke 1:39-45

At that time Mary got ready and hurried into a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed:

"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has

believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her!"

3. Quiet time...

People can read over the gospel text again and pick out a word or short phrase that strikes them and say it out loud. When everyone has had a chance to speak, people can silently listen to what God is saying to them in their hearts linking it with themselves, their community, society or the world. Then some sharing.

NB This is not time for argument.

4. Reflection Questions for

Luke 1:39-45

1. Mary and Elizabeth sing for "all the great unsung women who turned eternity to time, favoured of heaven, outcast on the earth: prophets who bring the best to birth."

Comment

Malcolm Guite

2. How will you celebrate Christmas differently this year?

5. Prayers

Mentioning the people and situations we want to pray for.



6. Background notes for

Luke 1:39-45

Luke has Zachariah, father of John the Baptist foretell that 'the loving kindness of the heart of our God' would visit us 'like the dawn from on high.' (Luke 1:78). Jesus' coming into the world is the definitive sign of God's love and tenderness for humanity.

Luke is careful to attribute this event as the 'overshadowing by the Holy Spirit', God's love out-poured, active and transforming. Nazareth is a small, unimportant village, away from the trading routes and cities. Mary is an ordinary young village girl. But it in this place and through this girl that the 'more powerful one' comes. Mary, from that moment carries the saviour of the world within her.

But there is no great interruption to ordinary life. Mary sets off to do an ordinary thing - common to all local women in her village. She sets off for Ain Karim 5 miles west of Jerusalem, in hilly country between the flat coastal plain and the Jordan valley. She goes to help Elizabeth by fetching water, washing, cooking, comforting, cleaning, chatting.

But Elizabeth recognizes more. Luke describes her as 'filled with the Holy Spirit' and seeing the real truth of the situation. The phrase 'jump for joy' in the O.T. often signalled that something prophetic was about to be spoken.

This 'ordinary' occasion of two women rejoicing in each other becomes a moment for Elizabeth to acknowledge and celebrate God's powerful intervention.