

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Micah 5:1-4 Hebrews 10:5-10 Luke 1:39-44

HOMILY

This last Sunday of Advent focusses on stories of individuals who feature in the story of the incarnation. We do not learn about the incarnation from angelic stories only. We also learn about the incarnation from ordinary human characters who have never lost their humanity.

Firstly, we have the great prophet who leapt in his mother's womb in the presence of Jesus is human like us. An unborn baby is not just a blob of cells but an intelligent, perceptive human being capable of interacting not only with the Spirit of God but with those around them. I must say that the interactions of the unborn baby live to be remembered and that they will feature in some way after birth. That perceptive human reaction of a baby; ordinary as it looks can reveal something deep.

We also have Zechariah, Elizabeth's husband who says nothing in today's Gospel story. All that because he had found it hard to accept the angel's message that his elderly barren wife would soon conceive. Zechariah, in his very human reaction reveals the hard side of the incarnation.

Next is Elizabeth. She was barren for many years. The word hope was no longer in her vocabulary. Luke tells us that when she became pregnant, she withdrew privately for five months – an old pregnant woman avoiding becoming a hot topic of gossip in the neighbourhood. Again, someone very human like anyone of us.

And our last character is Mary the great Advent figure. She is a young pregnant girl of 15 years or 16 years. She leaves the familiar surroundings and heads towards Judah with haste to the countryside where she is not known. She seeks and offers an intimate communion with her elderly cousin. A lot of things are at play in here.

Humanly speaking Mary needed to be away seeking the understanding of her cousin Elizabeth. But Elizabeth also needed Mary's joy and encouragement. She needed Mary's youth and Mary's faith. Even here again, Mary's three-month visitation was such human step like anyone of us would take for ourselves or for each other.

To a very great extent all these human characters have a vital role to play in the story of the incarnation. The different human reactions and moves have this strong message for each one of us. This message is that our extraordinary mission in life is lived by our ordinary human action for ourselves and for others.

- ❖ We are first and for most called to be human,
- ❖ we are not called to be God,

- ❖ we are not called to be angels,
- ❖ not even called to be saints – by losing our humanity.
- ❖ We are called to be human, fully human, and, come what may, we are called to hold onto the message of the angel to Mary: *“Nothing is impossible to God”*