

4th Sunday of Advent
Advent Message Series #4

The story of Mary and Elizabeth that is told in the gospel reading offers us a model of friendship. I imagine that most of us here have at least one or two people that we call friends? What is your definition of friendship? Friends usually share many things in common. This is true of Mary and Elizabeth: 1.) They were both pregnant. Mary at a young age around 14 or 15 and Elizabeth at an old age, perhaps in her 70s? 2.) Both pregnancies were announced by an angel. The angels' promises seemed impossible. 3.) They shared the same Jewish faith – a deep faith that allowed them to believe the promises. 4.) They were women in a man's world. Despite this, God chose to work through them. 5.) They were related to each other.

Because they were women in a man's world their selection by God reminds us that God works through people whom the world considers to be insignificant. The prophet Micah further reminds us in the first reading that God also chooses insignificant places to carry out his work – places like Bethlehem.

This is good news for us who belong to a parish located in a small town that even most Iowans don't know exists! People like Metro Mel whom we heard about earlier can encounter Jesus here at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish just as Elizabeth and the child in her womb encountered Jesus in the womb of Mary.

St. Teresa of Avila puts it this way in one of her books: "Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on the world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are they eyes, yours are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours."

If Metro Mel is going to come back to the Church, it might depend upon us – since as St. Teresa reminds us, we are the body of Christ. If we are honest many of us here have a little of Metro Mel in us. But for a variety of reasons we find this parish to be the Body of Christ for us. Just as Mary and Elizabeth reached out to each other in friendship in support of one another... so we too need to reach out in friendship to Metro Mel.

Keep your eyes open for Metro Mel. He may not know where the restrooms are. Show him the way. He may not know the responses during mass and when to sit, kneel and stand. Help him out. He may not know where to sit in church... welcome him when he sits next to you. Help him find the right song or reading in the missalette. Invite him to Seton Hall after mass for something to eat and drink. You will also encounter Mel outside of church. Be positive about your faith. Let others know that your faith affects the way that you lead your life. Invite others to worship here on the weekend. Are you willing to be a friend to Mel?