

# ***Shepherd of People, Come!***



## **I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS**

### **FIRST READING** (Mic 5:1-4a)

<sup>1</sup>\* But you, Bethlehem-Ephrathah <sup>a</sup> / least among the clans of Judah,/ From you shall come forth for me/ **one who is to be ruler in Israel**; whose origin is from of old,/ from ancient times./ <sup>2</sup>Therefore the Lord will give them up, until the time/ when she who is to give birth has borne,\*/ Then the rest of his kindred shall return/ to the children of Israel. <sup>b</sup> / <sup>3</sup>**He shall take his place as shepherd/ by the strength of the LORD**,/ by the majestic name of the **LORD**, his God;/ And they shall dwell securely, for now his greatness/ shall reach to the ends of the earth:/ <sup>4</sup>**he shall be peace.**<sup>\*</sup> If Assyria invades our country/ and treads upon our land,/ We shall raise against it seven shepherds,/ eight of royal standing.

**THE FOCUS: Ruler or Shepherd (Christ)**

### **COMMENTARY**

- Actually, the focus of the text is on Bethlehem.
- The prophet addresses himself to Bethlehem (But you, Bethlehem..”(v.1).
- But since it is now Advent Season which anticipates the coming of the Lord, we focus our attention on Christ who comes.
- Who is this one who comes in Micah? To be ruler in Israel (v.1); from a royal family, dy-

nasty (v.2); shall stand firm / shall shepherd his flock (a good leader.) (v.3); shall be peace (a good defender) (v.4).

- We think this one is none other than Jesus Christ.

### **REFLECTIONS**

We should not belittle anyone/anything, any place, for it might become the source of salvation. (*O Bethlehem, you're not the least...*)

We believe that Jesus is a good ruler who brings security and peace.

### **RESPONSORIAL PSALM** (Ps 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19)

**LORD, MAKE US TURN TO YOU;  
LET US SEE YOUR FACE  
AND WE SHALL BE SAVED**

### **SECOND READING** (Heb 10:5-10)

<sup>5</sup>dFor this reason, when **he came** into the world, he said:“**Sacrifice** and offering you did not desire,/ but a body you prepared for me;/ <sup>6</sup>ho-

locausts and sin offerings you took no delight in./  
7Then I said, ‘As is written of me in the scroll./  
Behold, I come to do your will, O God.’”<sup>8e</sup>First he says, “**Sacrifices** and offerings, holocausts and sin **offerings**,\* you neither desired nor delighted in.” These are **offered** according to the law.<sup>9</sup>Then he says, “Behold, I come to do your will.” He takes away the first to establish the second.<sup>10g</sup>By this “will,” we have been consecrated through the **offering** of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

**THE FOCUS: Christ the Sacrificial Offering**

### COMMENTARY

- The text centers on Christ’s coming as an offering. There are four principal types of Old Testament sacrifices: peace offerings (Lv 3, here called **sacrifices**); cereal offerings (Lv 2, here called **offerings**); **holocausts** (Lv 1); and **sin offerings** (Lv 4–5). This last category includes the **guilt offerings** of Lv 5:14–19.
- But the offering of Jesus as Messiah (Christ) is made once and for all. For its effect is lasting, echoing the prophets Jeremiah, Micah and Isaiah, that more than the sacrifices required by the Law (Torah), is mercy and justice and obedience to His will. This, Jesus fulfills.

### REFLECTIONS

In Jer 31:33–34, the prophet says a new covenant will be written in the hearts of men and women. The forgiveness of our sins that Jesus has brought out because of offering himself as sin-offering even if He himself does not know sin is indeed a fulfillment of this promise.

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### GOSPEL READING (Lk 1:39-45)

<sup>39</sup>During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah,<sup>40</sup> where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.<sup>41s</sup> When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the infant **leaped** in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit,<sup>42r</sup> cried out in a loud voice and said, “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.<sup>43</sup> And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord\* should come to me?<sup>44</sup> For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb **leaped for joy**.<sup>45u</sup> Blessed are you who believed\* that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.”

**THE FOCUS: Leap for Joy**

### COMMENTARY

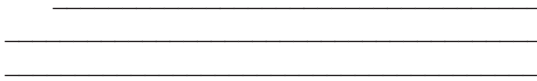
- The text is entitled the Visitation. Mary visits Elizabeth (pregnant for about 6 months already).
- Luke portrays the encounter between two mothers: Old mother, Elizabeth, post-menopausal stage, not supposed to give birth. Young mother, Mary, just had her monthly period, not supposed to be pregnant because she had no husband.
- The two characters portray joy in their hearts as they believe God has intervened in their lives.
- Mary goes in haste to Ein Karem (where Elizabeth is). Mary greets her upon arrival.
- Elizabeth acknowledges her greetings: Who am I?— an expression of joy.
- Even the baby inside the womb leaps for joy (twice reported).
- That blessedness in v.45 is an expression of joy (happy are you for you believed).

### REFLECTIONS

The visitation of Mary to Elizabeth is part of the series of joyful events that lead to the joyful

birth of Christ.

Joy is the by-product of saying “Yes to the Lord,” is the fruit of believing in the word of God (announced by the angel), is made possible through the encounter of two persons who believe God intervenes in their lives. More joy awaits in the events to come.



## II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR SHARING/HOMILY

The First Reading talks about the coming of a good ruler, from a humble place. This should be a source of rejoicing for those who are also put down. The Second Reading talks about Jesus as the Christ coming to become an offering, freely given to remit sins. The Gospel talks about the visitation which is a joyful encounter of two expectant mothers.

### *How to develop your homily*

Begin by narrating your story about your visit to your friends or relatives (*masaya*, good food, treated very well, felt important, etc) or when you were visited by others.

By nature, visits should provoke joy in us, because we are given importance. Visits usually are friendly. You cannot visit a person who is not your friend; you cannot go to a house without permission.

We must distinguish visitation and **bwisitation**, as we say in Tagalog. To go to a house in order to make war, to scold someone is not a visitation according to our texts.

According to the Gospel, Mary visits Elizabeth (to help her in giving birth or do some house chores as Elizabeth gives birth. Three months later Mary goes home.) Mary’s visit brings joy to Elizabeth and her baby. Mary’s faith in the word of God makes her blessed (happy). She did not

undergo a privation (like Zechariah, who at first did not believe in the angel at the Temple in Jerusalem; so he became dumb). Mary believes right away in the angel who visits her at Nazareth.

The First Reading does not explicitly talk about visitation, but God sending a prophet to talk and declare something good is a form of visitation. Who is not happy to hear that in a humble place like Bethlehem, a good leader will rise?

Likewise, the Second Reading does talk about the coming of Jesus and offering himself as a perfect sacrifice.

Advent is a time of his visitation. If we believe that he is coming to bring salvation (light, truth, wisdom, grace, etc), then we must welcome him, we must rejoice today, on Christmas and in the days to come.

We should have some nice feelings when we hear of Jesus’ coming (through his word and sacrament).

Like Elizabeth welcoming Mary, we should welcome Jesus with joy. Behind the person of Mary, we should acknowledge the presence of Jesus. Like John, we should leap with joy (*lukso, talon*).

When we visit our friends and relatives, we should bring joy (*hindi maghahasik ng lagim, hindi maghahari hari, kundi makipagtulungan*).

Mary has the right attitude and purpose when she visits Elizabeth (to help, to give joy).

-Prepared by Fr. Cielo Almazan, OFM

## III. OUR CONTEXT

1. Where to visit: prisons and hospitals (*so much time and money has been wasted in the malls*).

2. What sacrifices are you doing to make other people’s Christmas meaningful? (HM)