

Dec 22-24 weekday homilies

Dec 22-Jan 3: Dec 22 Monday: Lk 1: 46-56: 46 *And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; 49 for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. 50 And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation. 51 He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, 52 he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; 53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away. 54 He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, 55 as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity for ever." 56 And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her home.*

The context: Most probably the "Magnificat" (Canticle of Mary) is drawn from the canticle of Hannah in I Samuel 2, an ancient poem, originally thought to have nothing to do with Samuel's birth. Mary's song emphasizes that Jesus, like Samuel, was a "child of promise." Just as the barren Hannah could have no children so Mary, a virgin, could have no children. Further, Hannah and Mary were completely dedicated to the Lord. Just as Hannah dedicated her child Samuel to the Lord, so Mary offered her son Jesus for our salvation. On hearing Elizabeth's greetings, Mary sang, praising and thanking God for the great things He had done for her. He had filled her with graces, overshadowed her with His Holy Spirit and made her the mother of His Son Jesus. Mary praised God also for the mercy He had worked by humbling the proud, by ousting the mighty from their thrones and by exalting the lowly and filling the hungry with good things, a social, political and economic revolution.

Life messages: 1) We need to sing songs of gratitude to God as Mary did because of the great gift of life God gave us through our parents and the gift of early training we received from them in a Christian home.

2) Let us also glorify God every day through our works of charity for the gift of a particular vocation in life and the opportunities God gives us every day for doing good to others.

Dec 23 Tuesday: Lk 1: 57-66,80: 57 *Now the time came for Elizabeth to be delivered, and she gave birth to a son. 58 And her neighbors and kinsfolk heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. 59 And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they would have named him Zechariah after his father, 60 but his mother said, "Not so; he shall be called John." 61 And they said to her, "None of your kindred is called by this name." 62 And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he would have him called. 63 And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, "His name is John." And they all marveled. 64 And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. 65 And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea; 66 and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him*

The context: Today's Gospel describes the birth and naming of St. John the Baptist, the last Old Testament prophet. He was given the mission of heralding the promised Messiah and of preparing the Chosen People to welcome that Messiah, by preaching to them repentance and the renewal of life. John was born to the priest, Zechariah, and his wife, Elizabeth, in their old age. Today's Gospel passage describes John's birth, circumcision ceremony and naming.

A miraculous birth and an event of double joy: His elderly parents rejoiced in John's birth, as he was a gift from God in their old age. Since the child was a boy, all neighbors rejoiced with them, and the village musicians celebrated the birth by playing their joyful music. The naming followed the baby's Circumcision, and Elizabeth insisted that the child should be named John (which means "the Lord is gracious"). The mute Zechariah approved that name by writing "His name is John." At that action of obedient surrender to the Lord God, his speech was restored, and he loudly proclaimed the praises of God for blessing him with a son and Israel with her Deliverer, whose herald his son would be.

Life messages: 1) We need to pray for our parents and be thankful to them for the gift of life, the training and disciplining they have given us and the love and affection they have lavished on us. Let us ask God's pardon if we are, or were, ungrateful to them, do/did not take proper care of them in their illness or old age or ever inflicted pain on them. 2) We need to remember and pray for our godparents who, by baptism, made us children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus, heirs of heaven and members of the Church. 3) We should have the

courage of our Christian convictions as John the Baptist did, and we should become heralds of Christ as John was, by our transparent Christian lives.

Dec 24 Wednesday: Luke 1: 67-79: *67 And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying, 68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people, 69 and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, 70 as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, 71 that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us; 72 to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, 73 the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, 74 to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, 75 in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life. 76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, 77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, 78 through the tender mercy of our God, when the day shall dawn upon us from on high 79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."*

The context: Today's Gospel gives the prophetic hymn which Zechariah, filled with Holy Spirit, sang on the eighth day after his son John's birth, when all had assembled for the Naming and Circumcision ceremony. Although the Jews generally believed that Elijah the prophet would return to earth to prepare the way for the Messiah, Zechariah prophetically sang here that it was his son, John, who was going to prepare the way for the Messiah Jesus.

Zechariah's prophecy contains four steps of the Christian way we are supposed to take. 1) Preparation: Our life must be a preparation, leading us to our eternal salvation, enabling us to walk through/with/in Christ, the only sure way.

2) Correct knowledge of the only true God: Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior who taught us that God His Father is a loving and forgiving Father who saved us through His son Jesus.

3) Forgiveness of sins: This is the restoring of our broken relationship with God, accomplished through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus.

4) Walking in the way of peace: Peace is not the absence of trouble. It is the fullness of everything needed for man's highest good. Jesus

instituted all these means for our highest good in his Church, giving us the Holy Bible, the Sacraments and the centralized teaching authority of his Church, with Mary and the saints as role models and praying companions for our journey.