

December 24, 2006  
Fourth Sunday of Advent (C)

By Father Charles Bowes

Isaiah 62:1-5  
Psalm 89:4-5, 16-17, 27-29  
Acts 13:16-17, 22-25  
Matthew 1:1-25

## *Our faith brings us here and brings Christ near.*

“Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.” These words are attributed to Elizabeth as she addresses Mary, the mother of Jesus.

For years I felt I was a little crazy each Christmas, because in hearing these words of St. Luke chapter one, I invariably heard them as addressed to me as well as to Mary. I felt it was my own private devotional approach to Christmas. After all, here I was in church, and granted these words are directed to Mary, but aren't they also true of me and of every believer?

“Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.” After all, isn't that what brings us here – faith, belief that somehow God is near, in charge and all ultimately will be well?

Then, a while ago, I learned that none other than St. Ambrose of Milan, way back in the fourth century, heard these words in the same way I did. He wrote: “But you also are blessed, who hear and believe; for whoever believes also conceives in their spirit, and brings forth the word of God, and knows his works...There is only one mother of Christ according to the flesh, but according to faith, all bear the fruit of Christ.”

So I'm not so crazy after all...and neither are you. Christmas makes us a little nutty, so it's good to know that we're in good company with St. Ambrose to believe that in some way we each bring Christ to a waiting world. It's a good sort of craziness. I never cease to marvel at everything folks do this time of year – planning, trying to touch others' lives in some positive fashion – all the extra energy that requires. From the perspective of someone somewhat diminished in strength, so many trying so hard to do good is glorious to behold. It renews my strength. Thank you for that.

I think it is significant that Elizabeth declares Mary to be “blessed” because of her faith and not because of her role as a mother. Thus, a faith-filled Mary becomes the model for future generations of believers who are called to incarnate the blessings of their own faith into attitudes, choices and actions. We do that, you and I, at Christmas and all year-round.

Let us pray: You bring us to yourself in your way, and at your chosen time, Father of the Lord Jesus. Give us patience and peace, so that we may trust you as Mary did through Christ our Lord. Amen. And may God bless us every one.

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