

# Mary and Elizabeth's Holy Spirit Nudges

Advent 4  
December 2018

## Luke 1:39-55

### Mary Visits Elizabeth

<sup>39</sup>In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, <sup>40</sup>and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup>And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, <sup>42</sup>and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! <sup>43</sup>And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup>For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup>And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

### Mary's Song of Praise: The Magnificat

<sup>46</sup>And Mary said,  
"My soul magnifies the Lord,  
<sup>47</sup>and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
<sup>48</sup>for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.  
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
<sup>49</sup>for he who is mighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.  
<sup>50</sup>And his mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.  
<sup>51</sup>He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;  
<sup>52</sup>he has brought down the mighty from their thrones  
and exalted those of humble estate;  
<sup>53</sup>he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.  
<sup>54</sup>He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
<sup>55</sup>as he spoke to our fathers,  
to Abraham and to his offspring forever."

## Message

Advent 4

Leaping babies and the Holy Spirit

## Opening

The Advent Story is dominated by two types of people: a hairy man living in the wilderness and expectant women. They are all related and part of the same family.



So far we have mainly looked at the hairy man living in the wilderness and baptising people in the Jordan River. *Name?*

In today's Gospel we went back to the time before John the Baptist was born and heard about his mother named 'Elizabeth' and his future aunt named 'Mary', who was at that time carrying a baby who she knew she would call '*Jeshua*' whom we know as 'Jesus'.



The Advent story is still about expectation and preparation. It moves from how a hairy man in the wilderness speaks about this to how two expectant mothers spoke to each other about it.

So it's time for us to listen to the feminine side of the story.

And there I run into a shortcoming.

1. I am not a woman and
2. I have never been pregnant.

So unlike the hairy man in the wilderness baptising in the river this is not part of the Advent story I am well placed to tell.

What I do know is that unborn babies can suddenly kick quite hard because our first child behaved like she was in a gym and I felt the kicks in my back. That is a very sweet memory!

*To get some more insight on this could the mothers of any children here say something about their children leaping in the womb and what that meant for them?*

Advent is about expectation and preparation which is very much what pregnancy is all about for both mother, father, family and perhaps for baby too – even if they are not so aware of this?

### **Interpretation**

I want to make a single point today by noticing that today's Advent story is about 2 things. It is about:

- A. A number of bodies - baby bodies and mummy bodies.
- B. The Holy Spirit of God – who is alive but does not have a body.

Here is the point:

The mothers-to-be and their unborn bodies are shown to be excited about meeting each other and the mothers-to-be recognise this as the work of the Holy Spirit. God is stirring and they felt it in their wombs.

In fact Elizabeth feels the baby John to be leaping in her and is described as 'filled with the Holy Spirit' to the point where she begins to prophesy over Mary in song:

“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! <sup>43</sup> And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup> For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup> And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”

Then as Luke tells the story, Mary breaks out into an inspired prophetic summary of God's faithfulness and amazing works as remembered in the Hebrew Scriptures - known to us as the Old Testament. She sings a song of God's coming revolution breaking out.

This illustrates beautifully how the Holy Spirit may be experienced physically. Our bodies may become aware of the Holy Spirit's presence and 'message' even before our mind finds words for it. Even more so, that includes babies too.

**Application**

I expect that some people here know that already and its part of your life.

In my own experience there are times when the Holy Spirit seems to swell in the moment and highlight something for me to notice. It can at times be felt as a kick in my middle or 'guts' and can be quite strong. I call them crunches as that is what it feels like. I understand that to be my spirit being touched by the Holy Spirit and it makes me aware of that. It can be a strong experience but is in no way frightening or scary.

My point is that a bodily experience of God's Holy Spirit is possible. There is no reason to think that the Holy Spirit worked distinctively 2000 years ago or uniquely with people in the Bible so if we experience something described in the Bible today it just might well be the Holy Spirit.

I also expect that for some people what I have just shared may seem weird if not concerning so let me assure you:

Physical experience with the Holy Spirit is something that may be enjoyed. It is not necessary or something that we can make happen. It's a mystery of particular grace.

Then it is a personal experience and no matter how strong it's interpretation remains subject to the authority of scripture and discernment of the church. Yet, it is not to be rejected, despised or discounted.

Some people seem blessed with the wiring and sensitivity to register the presence of the Holy Spirit and that's how He works with them. In this case the Holy Spirit was making it plain to Elizabeth and Mary that he was deeply involved in what was happening in and through their pregnancies.

*Would anyone like to share how they have been aware through their bodies of the Holy Spirit at work?*