

Fourth Sunday of Advent  
December 23, 2018  
Fr. Rick Lorenz

## Reflection

I went to St. Martin de Porres elementary school a couple weeks ago and met the kindergarten class. There were many different questions, but they had one thing in common. Most of the children asked, "Why?" "Why was Jesus hungry?" They had heard a song about him being hungry, so I explained about fasting in the wilderness. "Why do wars happen?" Remembrance Day had made an impression on them. I said that people in different countries can make too many angry mistakes. "Why did Jesus have to die?" He chose it, so that we could join him in heaven.

In today's Gospel, Elizabeth also asks a question with the word "why." "And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?" People wonder about this question when they say the Rosary: the Visitation is the second Joyful Mystery. There are a few answers. In a natural way, Mary wanted to help Elizabeth during her pregnancy. She also wanted to share the news of her own pregnancy. In a supernatural way, Mary (being full of grace), was prompted by the Holy Spirit. She bore Jesus within her womb. Jesus wanted to communicate the Holy Spirit to John the Baptist. This caused him to leap for joy within the womb of Elizabeth. She also became filled with the Holy Spirit. He enabled Elizabeth to recognize Mary as the mother of her Lord. She exclaimed, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb."

Mic 5:2-5a  
Ps 80  
Heb 10:5-10  
Lk 1:39-45

Her greeting has echoed down the ages. It's part of our own greeting to the Blessed Virgin, which we utter each time we say the Hail Mary. It's one of the first prayers that we learn, and might be the last one we remember. This is also the work of the Holy Spirit. Through him, Elizabeth's words were captured in Scripture. Our prayer is the work of the Holy Spirit, and through him these words came into our devotional life. The Holy Spirit is the spouse of Mary in the order of grace. He is the uncreated Immaculate Conception, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit gives Mary the grace that she uses to bring us to Jesus: *ad Jesum per Mariam*, to Jesus through Mary. Mary brought Jesus to John and Elizabeth, and now our mother in faith brings us to her son.

Mary once asked the question "why" as well. "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously (Lk 2:48)." She asked this when they found the child Jesus in the Temple. He had left them as they made their way back to Nazareth. "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" Mary had done the will of the Father by every deed of her sinless life, and especially by her *fiat*: "let it be done to me according to your word (Lk 1:38)." Jesus also did the will of the Father, beginning with the incarnation, using the flesh that he gained from his mother. "See, God, I have come to do your will, O God."

Even leaving Joseph and Mary was the will of the Father. Jesus pained them by his decision: it's one of her seven sorrows. But she kept his words in her heart (Lk 2:51). The experience helped her prepare for the sorrows to come, which would raise her from mother of Jesus to mother of all disciples (Jn 19:26-27). It strengthened an unwavering faith with "the strength of the Lord...blessed is she who believed." Until her own Assumption into glory, she could pray to the Father these words from the vision of her son's Ascension: "Let your hand be upon the man at your right, the son of man you have made strong - for your self. Then we will never turn back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name."