

**Advent IV (Dec 20th) Micah 5:1-4, Hebr. 10:5-10 Luke 1:39-45**

A little girl was walking along a beach covered with thousands of starfish left dying by the receding tide. Seeking to help, she started picking up the dying starfish and tossing them back into the ocean. A man who watched her with amusement, said, "Little girl, there are hundreds of starfish on the beach. You cannot make a difference by putting a few of them back into the sea." Discouraged, she began to walk away. Suddenly, she turned around, picked up another starfish, and tossed it into the sea. Turning to the man, she smiled and said, "At least I made a difference to that one!" Today's gospel tells us how Mary, a village girl carrying Jesus in her womb, made a difference in the lives of her cousin Elizabeth and of the child in her womb. The child John, as he grew up, helped Mary's Son to transform the history of mankind by preparing the way for the Messiah. The starfish story suggests that each person, no matter how unimportant, may truly benefit from our work, and that any service, however small, is valuable.

The Gospel speaks about Mary's visit to Elizabeth. There is a saying, "*He (she) who is on fire cannot sit on a chair.*" Mary, filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit, hurried to the mountain country where Elizabeth lived, in order to convey the Holy Spirit to her cousin and her child. The trip from Nazareth in Galilee where Mary lived to a village in Judea where Elizabeth lived would take four days. Already, before his birth, John had been touched by the Spirit of Jesus.

We need to carry Jesus to others as Mary did. We can make a real difference in the lives of others by carrying Jesus to others. However, we cannot give what we do not possess. Christmas is the ideal time for us to be filled with the spirit of Christ, allowing his rebirth within us. Thus he enables us to share his love with all whom we encounter by offering them humble service, unconditional forgiveness and compassionate caring. Sharing Jesus with others is the best Christmas gift we can give. God wants each of us, like Mary, to carry to those around us the Lord of Life. It is easy to send flowers, Christmas cards or gifts. To give the gift of oneself, however, is the greatest gift of all. Let us take the time to visit others this Christmas, to bring some inspiration into their lives, and hopefully to bring them closer to God. Let us share with them the Spirit of God, the Spirit of consolation, of courage, of peace and joy, just as Mary did. Is there anyone we know who is lonely, in a nursing home, ill or bedridden? Can we help him or her with a brief visit? Is there extra food in our pantry that a poor family could use?

“Come, Lord Jesus! Let me receive your mercy so that I can know peace and tranquility during this hectic time. Even now, I want to prepare myself to welcome you with an open heart on Christmas Day.”

**JOKE OF THE WEEK:** *A woman went to the Post Office to buy stamps for her Christmas cards. "What denomination?" asked the clerk? "Oh, Good Heavens! Have we come to this?" said the woman. "Well, give me 20 Catholic stamps for me and 20 Baptist stamps for my husband."*