



Pastoral Reflection
For the Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 19, 2021

This is the weekend of Advent when our devotion to Mary as “Undoer of Knots” takes us to look at the knots in family life. It could not be more appropriate that the Gospel for this weekend presents the Visitation. In this story the young, unwed, pregnant Mary went not to the elders to help her undo the knots of her life and find the courage to deal with them, not to a priest, not to her father, not even to Joseph, but to another woman in her family, her cousin, Elizabeth. She came for an experience of wise old human hugging just to let the present sink in before facing what she knew would be a challenging future defying explanation when she returned home and her situation became obvious. Elizabeth would also have had to come out of hiding to meet Mary, having been the subject of a great deal of gossip for her post-menopausal pregnancy. “What was she thinking for God’s sake?” Both of them had been told by angels that their pregnancies were part of some unexplainable divine event. Talk about a “knotty family situation”!

Each of these women knew intuitively, as women do, what had happened to the other. Tears and fears would be as safe between them as the emerging joy each one felt, captured so well in this watercolor. They would spend three months together – a time to tell stories that connected their lives – the “her-stories” that nobody knows. In those three months, graced by God and each other, however their situations arose, two women would come to the fuller dimensions destined for them.

And who knew that God’s magnificent, cosmic revolution against the authority of sin and death was here proclaimed on this day of visitation at ground zero in the bodies of these two women? Yet without a single weapon drawn, the power of death was slain in Zecharias’s house that day. This is a new kind of prophecy in a whole different setting. We have not a man preaching to an assembly but two pregnant women having a conversation in the intimate setting of a house in the hills. THIS is where God chose to have this revelation happen. This is where our Scriptures and our Church show us that God’s prophetic revelation is proclaimed. And it is indeed a revolution. The thoughts that Luke places on Mary’s lips are about a woman being called blessed forever though she lives in a world where men rule. The mighty are deposed from their thrones. The poor and the hungry are not just satisfied, they are heard and remembered. This revelation would soon begin with a couple of swaddling bundles in grateful women’s arms, the pride of their fathers . . . and the slumbering world wouldn’t suspect a thing. Could the undoing of family knots be any more amazing?

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