

Homily for 4th Sunday of Advent Br Adams

In the Gospel, we have the story of Mary's Visitation of her cousin, Elisabeth. During that visitation, Elisabeth spoke those lovely words to her: "Blessed is she who believed that the promise made to her by the Lord would be fulfilled."

The theme of the blessedness of those who believe runs right through the Gospel. Wonderful things happen for those who believe. To take a few examples.

Jesus said to the centurion, 'Go; be it done for you as you have believed,' and his servant was cured (Mt 8:13). To the woman with haemorrhage he said, 'take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well,' and her bleeding stopped (Mt 9:22). To the two blind men He said, 'according to your faith, be it done to you,' and they got their sight back (Mt 9:29).

You could say that the central theme of the Gospel is the blessedness of those who believe. All of Jesus' preaching had as its aim to trigger faith in people's hearts. However, it is not simply a matter of believing, but of believing and acting on that belief. It is a question of hearing the word and doing it – taking risks on it, and making sacrifices because of it. Do not bother proclaiming that you believe unless you act accordingly.

You sometimes hear people say, it is easy for you; you have great faith. But it is not like that. Faith does not always make things easy. In fact, the opposite is more likely to be the case. It is because we have faith that we refuse to give up. Faith impels us to persevere, to struggle on, often with no guarantee of a happy outcome. A person with faith never gives up.

Mary is blessed because she not only believed but also acted on her belief. Immediately after the visit of the angel Gabriel, she went with haste to visit Elisabeth. From this we see that her religion was not a matter of mere sentimentality. It was something she converted into deeds.

Mary was the first and most perfect disciple of Jesus. This is why the Church proposes her as a model for us. We too will be blessed if, like Mary, we hear the word of God and act on it.

Christmas can be a great help to our faith. Somehow, we find it easier to trust God at Christmas than at any other time, because we feel that God is very close to us and very loving towards us at this time.

The essence of the Good News is that God made himself present to us in the life of One who walked on this earth, indeed so truly present that this One, Jesus, was God's Son. At the first Christmas, there were those who believed and those who did not believe. The Gospel stresses the blessedness of those who believed the Good News.

Christmas makes it possible for us to enter into an intimate relationship with God. And Christmas also calls us to open our hearts to one another. And in opening our hearts to one another, we are opening ourselves to receive the great joy announced to the shepherds by the angel.