



FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK  
**FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT: DECEMBER 18/19, 2021**

Dear Parishioners,

We reflect on the meaning of motherhood during the last days of Advent.

Two mothers-to-be, ELIZABETH and MARY – God's timing is difficult for both women. How much easier it would have been for ELIZABETH had her body been more limber and supple? How much easier it would have been for MARY if her child had arrived after her marriage to Joseph? In a culture in which a woman was esteemed for the male children she bore, ELIZABETH likely endured accusatory glances and unkind comments throughout her life as people wondered why God was punishing her with barrenness? Likewise, in MARY's little village of Nazareth, the gossip about her probably started flying once her condition was known.

ELIZABETH, who has been utterly faithful to God all her life, despite the suffering she has endured, is the perfect companion for MARY. She helps MARY learn to trust even more deeply the mysterious ways of God, as she endures the many difficulties that come with saying, "yes" to God. They knew that their lives would never be the same, and that the children growing silently inside them would change the world forever.

So what do you do if: Your life has been turned upside down like MARY'S? When you bear a secret that few could understand, even if you share it? Your mind alternates between crying and laughing, between profound wonder and profound confusion, every time you think about the secret growing inside of you? You seek out someone who understands someone who has been there.

Perhaps you found solace in a small circle of trust and understanding when you lost a loved one, or experienced a divorce, or faced chemotherapy, or kicked alcoholism.

A small support group of folks, who have shared your experience, will, therefore, challenge your faulty thinking, embrace your fears, and celebrate your hopes – without trite clichés or judgments, but with sturdy and empathetic embrace that is the group to whom you run when the secret within you is overwhelming. And for MARY, that small circle was ELIZABETH.

Wouldn't you love to know what they talked about as they waited together?

Like expectant women in the waiting room outside an OB/GYN office, their conversation must have been full of shared knowledge, spoken and unspoken support, and whispered secrets reserved only for those who experience such wonder and miracle. What a comfort ELIZABETH and MARY must have been for each other! And what a bond must have been forged over those three months! **Soul Sisters, indeed!!**

*Father Mike Meany*



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