

The Visitation

December 24, 2006

(Advent 4 - Year C)

Luke 1: 39-56

St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas

I assume that most of you who are here this morning will come back this evening, to celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ at one of our Christmas Eve services.

Thus, I will keep my words this morning shorter than usual, because I assume that you will hear the good news preached again tonight.

But, for now, I appreciate that you are here today, to hear the story of the visitation of Mary to the house of her relative Elizabeth.

The season of Advent still has a few more hours to go, and Advent still has something to say to us.

One of the many privileges that I have as a priest in God's Church at this time of year is that I have the opportunity to take Christmas Communion to people who are unable to make it to church on Christmas.

I travel in my car, packing up a stole to go around my neck and packing up my home communion kit.

In my home communion kit, there is a small pyx, which has consecrated bread in it.

Also, a small cruet of consecrated wine.

A small paten and a miniature chalice are also included.

I knock on the doors of our church members, to visit them and to bring the holy meal to them, the holy meal that we share each week here at the altar at St. Alban's.

When I go on a home visitation, I spread out a small corporal, which is a white linen cloth, much like a placemat, on which I place the bread and the wine.

I then place the holy things of God onto the corporal, onto any flat surface that I can find.

Coffee tables, TV trays, night stands - anything will do.

And, it is there, in homes and on small flat surfaces, that we share in the

Holy Communion.

However, I must admit that I enjoy the conversation and the visitation, as much as I enjoy the short Communion service that we share. Last Friday morning, I was at a home having Christmas communion, and we enjoyed the visitation so much, that I sat at their piano and we sang Christmas carols together.

There is something very holy about visiting in someone else's home, Homes that are very ordinary and real:

With a sink full of dishes,
And vacuum cleaner hoses laying on the floor,
And with cats trying to jump on the TV tray which I have set up as a makeshift altar.

There is something very holy about visitation.

Today's Gospel story is about a home visitation.

Mary is a young teenaged girl who has been told by an angel that she is pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And, the writer of Luke's Gospel tells us that Mary then

“Set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house...of her relative Elizabeth.”

Mary went to the home of her relative Elizabeth for a visit.

Mary went on a home visitation, carrying the precious body of Christ, not in a home communion kit, but within herself.

Last Thursday, I went to pick up my mother in-law from DFW airport. And, at DFW, I saw many other people setting out and going with haste on a home visitation.

In fact, my own home is being visited this weekend by my mother, my father and my mother in-law.

This weekend, your home might be the scene of a home visitation, as well.

But, if you are alone this Christmas weekend, then I invite you to make a home visitation to someone else.

I invite you to set out and go with haste to a friend or relative that you have not visited in years.

You might not be physically able visit them in their home, but an unexpected phone call or a surprise e-mail could certainly be a 21st century version of the Visitation.

(Wouldn't you be curious to read the e-mail that the Virgin Mary would have sent to Elizabeth!)

For, the Advent and Christmas seasons are about a home visitation.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus came among us and visited us.

And now, two thousand years later, Jesus still comes and visits us, as we visit each other.

Jesus still comes into our hearts, spreading out a placemat on any flat surface he can find, visiting us and feeding us and loving us.

Jesus still comes into ours hearts, today, on a home visitation.

AMEN.

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