

**WHY IS THIS GRANTED TO ME THAT THE MOTHER OF MY LORD SHOULD COME TO ME? –  
Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM**

***Luke 1, 39-45***

***In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”***

With a few skillful words, Luke is the evangelist that more than all the others presents us the figure of Mary, Jesus’ mother. Let us see what the evangelist writes for us in this fourth Sunday of Advent; chapter 1, 39-45.

First the context. There had been the annunciation. The angel Gabriel had asked Mary to collaborate in God’s design by being the mother of the son. Mary does something unimaginable for the culture of that time. At that time, a woman was not authorized to make any decision without first having consulted and to having received the approval, of the father, husband or son.

Well, Mary had asked no man. She decided by herself. It is something inconceivable for that culture. But that which the evangelist now writes is even more absurd. Let’s read on.

*“ In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah,..”* The angel had told her that her cousin Elizabeth expected a baby and she, once that it had been announced that God will be born of her, she did not put herself under a glass dome to be revered, to accept all the veneration or the devotion of the others, but she puts herself ready to serve.

The evangelist wants us to understand that every authentic experience of the Spirit results in service. However, a particular service because here the evangelist says that Mary “arose”, it does not say that she joined a caravan. But she arose and went towards the town of Judah. From Galilee to go to Judah, there were two roads: one was longer but safer, that went through the valley of the Jordan, the other was shorter, but dangerous because it went over the mountains of Samaria.

We know the between the Jews and Samaritans there was a profound enmity. It was dangerous to go through the mountains; there was danger of being killed. However, for Mary the desire to serve, the desire to communicate life is more important than her own safety. Therefore she hurries to begin the journey towards this town.

*“...she entered the house of Zechariah.. “ ...and whom do we greet, “ the owner of the house ”. Nothing of this “..and greeted Elizabeth.” the wife. It is unconceivable, it is the house owner that had to be greeted first. Mary no, she greets Elizabeth, it is a meeting between two women for whom pregnancy was impossible; one because she was sterile and the other was still a virgin.*

Mary enters and greets as the angel had done with her. *“ And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary.... “ Here it is not a formality, and not limited to the desire of good, but to procure it, “.. the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit..”* Here the evangelist anticipates that which will be Jesus’ work, to baptize in the Holy Spirit, immerse each person in the fullness of God’s love

*“...and she exclaimed with a loud cry,”.....in the house of the incredulous high priest - and for this he is mute - and the woman with her takes on the roll of the prophet: “Blessed are you among women “* Here these verses contain a dozen quotes from the bible. This part is taken from the book of Judges, where it was the blessing of Jael, one of the great women of Israel.

*“..and blessed is the fruit of your womb!”* This is sensational. *“ Fruit of your womb!”* it is found only once in the Old Testament, but it refers to a man, the man who is faithful to the Lord. This time the evangelist attributes this to Mary.

Then she says *“And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord.. “* meaning the Messiah *“..should come to me?”* Here the evangelist writes this part taking into account the great episode in the story of Israel when the arch that contained the tablets of the alliance made a stop in someone’s house. And also this person was amazed saying: *“Why does the King my Lord come to his servant?”*

*“For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.”* literally from exultation. And here is the first beatitude of the gospel.

*“And blessed is she who believed...”* If Elizabeth proclaimed Mary blessed because she had believed, there is also a veiled rebuke to the husband, Zechariah, who had not believed. *“... that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”* The virgin Mary had believed in God’s design and became proclaimed “blessed”.

It is the first beatitude that opens the gospel. The last we find in John’s gospel: *“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”* ( John 20, 29)

Mary's existence is enclosed in these two beatitudes. What is the significances of these two beatitudes? Mary has understood - and if the church presents this as a model believer, it is also valid for us - Mary has understood to be on the inside of an extraordinary project of love. And everything that is encounter in life, all that happens in life, whether good or bad, only serves to realize this project.

Here is the Mary that the church proposes to us as a model believer.