

Father Dave's Homily

12/23/12 4 Advent C

-- If any weekend in the Church year is an argument for women to preach, this one is. After all, not just one but both of the main characters in the gospel are women.

-- Elizabeth is an older woman who has been blessed in her old age by God. She is carrying John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus. But she recognizes God's special presence in the womb of her young cousin.

-- In the litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, one of the invocations is *Ark of the Covenant, pray for us*. For the Jews of the Old Testament, this ark, which contained the tablets of the ten commandments, symbolized God's presence among them.

-- As she carries Jesus in her womb, Mary is that ark, for she carries the Lord and Savior himself. Elizabeth recognizes her blessing. Yet Elizabeth also carries God's presence, not only in her unborn son, but in her person. For she shares God's love and grace with those close to her.

-- In a similar sense, many people are the "ark" of God's presence, in a manner of speaking. And quite a few (though certainly not all) of these people are women.

-- Take, for instance, Nancy. She is the coordinator of volunteers for the Cherry Street Mission in downtown Toledo. She also cooks most of the meals. I've not met her, but I'm told she goes about her ministry with a care for everybody there, volunteers and clients alike.

-- Through her work and in her person she carries the Lord's presence to the people who come through the doors of that kitchen and shelter. And there are many others like her.

-- I see God's presence in the people who serve at our Thursday community meals at Christ UM Church. They are in need of more people to be Christ's hands to those who come for either food they would not otherwise get or fellowship they would otherwise lack.

-- So often, when I visit hospitals, I see His presence in nurses and other health personnel who patiently care for the sick.

-- In these past days, we've sensed His presence in teachers, parents and other adults who've offered assurances and love to children frightened by the events which took place at Sandy Hook Elementary School the Friday before last.

-- God calls us to bear his presence in the particular circumstances of our lives. He asks us to radiate his love to the people whose lives we touch.

-- Mary and Elizabeth did this. Though the gospel scene looks peaceful, we know that their lives were far from peaceful. Mary had to wonder how Joseph and his family were receiving the news of her pregnancy (let alone her own family).

-- Elizabeth had to wonder how she would handle her pregnancy. It must have been difficult to deal with her husband who could not speak.

-- God's call doesn't always come in peaceful moments. I remember the day I visited the actual scene of today's gospel in March, 1996. That was far from a peaceful day.

-- Hours before then, just a few miles away, a bus bomb had exploded, killing roughly the number of people that were killed at Sandy Hook Elementary. All was (and is) not well in that corner of the world.

-- Yet God's presence still shone through, especially in the people we met in that small village.

-- May we become bearers of God's presence, following the example of Elizabeth and of Mary, the Ark of the Covenant.