

Homily For Tuesday of the Third Week of Advent - Year II

St Peter's 8:30 AM/7:00 PM Masses - Dec 19, 2023

Judges 13:2-7,24-25 "A man of God came to me with the appearance of an angel, awe inspiring."

Psalms 71:3-17 "You, O Lord, took me from my mother's womb."

Luke 1:5-25 "Your wife, Elizabeth will bear a son. He will be great in the sight of the Lord."

The Greatest Zinger

Introduction

Today we get one of the best bible 'zingers' of all time. You can find zingers everywhere. That's what comedians do. They are usually a sharp short put down. Dorothy Parker was a 20th century American writer. In her time, she was called 'queen of the zingers'. Her line was: "The first thing I do in the morning is brush my teeth and sharpen my tongue."

With the bible, we read **what** was said, but sometimes we have to imagine **how** something was said. Not so today in the conversation between the priest Zechariah and the angel who came to him while he was serving in the 'holy of holies' in the temple.

Luke

Let's set the stage. It was a very big deal when a priest got to take a turn going into the heart of the temple of God's presence, to light incense and pray to God for the people. We find out that many were outside praying while he was inside. When the angel appeared, Zechariah was terrified. The angel tells him not to be afraid and that his prayer has been heard. The implication is that he has been praying about the lack of a child to he and his wife, Elizabeth. The message is that God will answer that prayer. Where there was barrenness/emptiness, there will be life. And not just any life but one that will give glory to God, and which will be central to God's plan to save his people.

Knowing that it is an angel from God, and hearing that God knows his deepest longing, and being in the service of that God at the highest level, surely Zechariah

will fall down on his knees in gratitude. Nope. Instead he asks for proof. That's where we get the zinger: "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. But now, because you did not believe my words, you will become mute until the day these things occur." Isn't that awesome? And, of course, that is exactly what happens, because God always speaks the truth into places where it looks like there is only emptiness. This line is not just for Zechariah. It's for all of us who sometimes question or doubt whether God is in charge and working out his great plan to save us from sin and death.

Judges

The rest of the message from today is about the great women of salvation history, those women who physically and spiritually receive God's promises into their own bodies. The most important angelic visitation in all of history will happen to the woman Mary. In the book of Judges, Samson's mother is not named, but she is heroic in how she receives the angelic visitor. She doesn't need her husband to tell her it is an angel. She is awe inspired. Without being named, she is one of the great women of salvation history.

The message to her will foreshadow Mary: You will conceive and bear a son. He will be dedicated to God. Exactly this happens. Through this miracle, it says that Israel will begin to be delivered from the Philistines, from their enemies. Soon we will celebrate a Son born who will deliver us from death and the devil, our ultimate enemies. Pregnant women who believe God become the sign of hope for all people.

We are able to name this great woman, Elizabeth, wife of the doubting priest, Zechariah. She who looks barren, is so receptive to God that the Spirit of God fills her with joy while she bears John, her son, who will announce the coming Messiah Saviour. Like the unnamed woman in Judges, she dedicates that son and gives him back to God for the sake of the greater good of those who would believe and not doubt, God's plan to bless all people and nations.

Call To Conversion

St. John of the Cross says let the Lord enter in and infuse your soul. Let go of what keeps us apart. God will not leave us in our pride and shame. Let us make room for him in this way today, and in so doing make room for him to born again in our hearts very soon." Nothing is by chance. All is part of His plan.

With Christmas only a few days away, may the angel of the Lord find us ready to receive life in us where there appears to be only barrenness. Let us keep ourselves in the presence of God during the day, to intensify our love for Jesus Christ in our prayer, to receive Holy Communion with devotion, because the angel who stands in the presence of God is once again announcing that Jesus is ready to be born again in us who were thought to be barren. That's a zinger worth repeating.

Key Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *He who is to come will not delay, and now there will be no fear, for he is our Saviour.*

Collect: *O God, who through the holy Virgin, revealed the radiance of your glory to the world, grant that we may venerate with integrity of faith the mystery of so wondrous an incarnation.*

Judges: *There was a man of Dan, whose name was Manoah. His wife was barren. The angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said, "You shall conceive and bear a son. No razor is to come on his head, for the boy shall be a nazirite to God from birth. It is he who shall begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines." The woman told her husband, "A man of God came to me. His appearance was like that of an angel of God, awe inspiring. He said to me 'You shall conceive and bear a son. So then drink no wine and eat nothing unclean, for the boy shall be a nazirite to God from birth to the day of his death. The woman bore a son, and named him Samson. The boy grew, and the Lord blessed him. The spirit of the Lord began to stir him.*

Psalm: *You are my rock and my fortress. Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked. For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust. Upon you I have leaned from my birth. It was you who took me from my mother's womb.*

Luke: *In the days of king Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both were living blamelessly according to the commandments. But they had no children and both were getting on in years. Once when Zechariah was serving as priest before God, the whole assembly was praying outside. There appeared to him an angel of the Lord. Zechariah was terrified. But the angel said, "Do not be afraid, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear a son, and you will name him John. You will have joy, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink. Even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah he will turn the hearts of parents to their children, and make ready a people for the Lord." Zechariah said, "How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man and my wife is getting on in years." The angel replied, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. But now, because you did not believe my words, you will become mute until the day these things occur." Meanwhile, the people were waiting. When he did come out, he could not speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. After those days, his wife Elizabeth, conceived. She said, "This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favourably on me.*

Prayer Over the Offerings: *Be pleased, O Lord, with our humble prayers and offerings.*

Prayer After Communion: *O Lord, teach us to judge wisely the things of earth and hold firm to the things of heaven*