



Advent Reflection for Friday, December 9th

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Luke 1: 39-45

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be* a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.'

Reflection by Geoff Kurtz:

I have never seen an angel, at least not as far as I know. Elizabeth, it seems, never sees one either.

If anyone in Luke's story about Zechariah, Mary, and Elizabeth were to be hesitant, doubtful, waiting to see what others said, I would have thought it would be my fellow non-visionary, Elizabeth. Oddly, that's not how the story goes. Elizabeth is the first human being we meet in Luke's gospel whose opening line is not a question. She doesn't assume that someone else, maybe one of her angel-seeing friends, will tell her what's going on; she doesn't even pause to figure out the whys and hows. She simply declares things, big things. It's not that there's anything wrong with a faith that includes questions and pauses. It's that Elizabeth's unhesitating faith speaks especially to those of us who, like her, have never experienced the shock and clarity of seeing an angel.

When Mary comes to visit her, Elizabeth describes how she came to have the faith to make big declarations. "The child in my womb leaped for joy," she says. The remarkable thing here is that the moment Elizabeth feels her child move, she understands this little kick as a signal, a message. We're told that she was "filled with the Holy Spirit," but that comes second. First, she

had to be open to understanding the little movement of an easily-overlooked person as a message; she had to be ready to notice and to receive a message.

Reading Elizabeth's story, I begin to think about how the world around me might be thick with signals from God, messages from God. Maybe the signals will come to me as they did for Elizabeth: through the movements, the joys or pains, of people nearby. Maybe they will come by way of other things: the changing seasons, the evening light, music, the pages of a book, an everyday coincidence. Elizabeth's story tells me to expect that even when I don't see angels, there will be kicks and nudges, maybe little and maybe not so little, through which God will call me to action and to commitment. Will I notice them? Will I recognize them as messages? Could I respond without hesitation, like Elizabeth?

I want Elizabeth's story to teach me that kind of openness, that kind of readiness.

Geoff lives in Kensington with his wife, Alyson, and their children, Asa, Lewis, and Frances. Along with various combinations of family members, he has been attending Holy Apostles for a little more than a year (after having drifted through a few times over the previous few years).

