

**December 22, 2018**

**4th Sunday in Advent**

**Blessed are you, Mary, for you have believed that  
what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled**

*Only God can transform us so that we may be able to live  
beyond any egg we have ever scrambled*

Historical background to this Gospel story. The trip from Nazareth in Galilee where Mary lived to a village in Judea where Elizabeth lived would have taken four days. A fourteen-year-old unmarried girl like Mary traveling alone would have been open to charges of shameful intentions and conduct. They would have been accompanied by men of their village. God visited Mary and Elizabeth who were fragile and vulnerable. God can only enter those who are fragile and vulnerable. This not just a story about them, it's a story about us

I came across this article written by Jesuit Fr. Jack Bentz in 2009 titled, "Finding God". It gives an account of how God entered Ignatius of Loyola precisely where he was fragile and vulnerable. Ignatius lived from 1492-1556. He was of a lower class nobility. In 1521, he joined with the Spanish in fighting against the French at the battle of Pamplona. He was injured when a cannon ball tore open the left calf of his leg and broke his right shin giving him a limp the rest of his life. In 1523, he went to live in a cave in Manresa, Spain, where he experienced a profound mystical conversion. He founded the Jesuit Order in 1540. God entered Ignatius where he was fragile and vulnerable.

Fr. Bentz writes, *“Ignatius traveled his world, fell in love, and was involved in armed combat. He had never planned anything else for himself, and then he was struck down by a cannonball. A radical failure was necessary to get him to pay attention to God. Ignatius was perfect material for transformation.*

*“And this is where God came in; this is where God always comes in, through the silent and fragile. Ignatius had no plans to follow Christ. Rather, he was caught off guard by God’s surprise attack, though it was hardly a fair fight as God had Ignatius completely outmanned. God was in the cannonball that smashed into Ignatius; God was in the French soldiers who captured him; and God was in the books he read and the daydreams he dreamed. God was there when Ignatius was no more than an undersized soldier, past his prime with a gimp leg and an oversized ego. God, the creator of the universe, waited Ignatius to figure it out. God waited for him to examine his life, add up the pieces, learn how to listen and limp out into the world in search of wholeness. And then he founded the Jesuits.*

*“God waits for all of us to examine our lives, add up the pieces, learn how to listen and limp out into the world in search of wholeness. Sometimes he sends a cannonball for those among us too slow to get the message. Sometimes he speaks to us through friends and family; always God is working in the events of our emotional lives, drawing us to him. Every disaster in our lives is*

*a call to conversion or to deeper conversion. God is always there waiting for us to examine our lives, add up the pieces, learn how to listen and limp out into the world in search of wholeness. God is also always with us when we find a small burst of joy from an unexpected quarter or long months of dark dullness in our dream job. Following Christ is a journey into a shared humanity ripe with deep joy and care for one another. So what are we waiting for today? A cannonball?"*

God enters wherever we are fragile and vulnerable. There is a story of God entering what is fragile and vulnerable which I heard told by Oblate Fr. Ronald Rolheizer at the Los Angeles Religious Education Congress in 2006. It's a hard story - about going to hell and back; it's a story of how God always enters in wherever we are fragile and vulnerable.

*"I was saying mass in a resort on a Sunday afternoon on a hot 95 and above day. It was by a beach and people were there, and everybody just wanted this mass to be over so that they could go back to the beach and their barbeques. And I wanted it over too. It was a hot little church, and I say this mass, and I was in the sacristy taking off my vestments, and a young man comes in. Mid-thirties, very agitated, and he says, 'Fr, I'd like to go to confession.' He shut the door, and he sat down, and huge tears began to flow down his cheeks, and he cried in the telling of this. 'Fr, I've come to confession even though I know God has forgiven this. I want to tell you my story. I have been to hell and back. I was in hell, but God didn't stop loving me. This is my story.*

*"I'm a married man, three kids, Catholic. I'm working for a company. A couple of years ago, I began to drift into an affair with my secretary. You know how these things happen, one thing leads to another. I still loved my wife and my kids; don't ask me to explain all that. And the curious thing is I didn't feel any guilt whatsoever. So, I was living a double life, felt no guilt. It all culminated a couple months ago, when just before we were going on a family vacation, the secretary came to me and said, 'I'm pregnant.' And she said, 'I'm going to have an abortion.' And he said I didn't have time to deal with it, and I went with my wife and kids on this vacation.*

*"We came back on a Sunday night. We were unpacking the car, and I looked in the mailbox, and here was a note from this woman. She had aborted their child, and she called me many names. She was leaving town and didn't want me ever to see her again. Before that, I hadn't felt any guilt. I should have, but I didn't. Now, it was the opposite.*

*"Everything I've done wrong, beginning with the abortion – it just beat me down, I couldn't handle it. I helped unpack the car in a stupor, then I told my wife I was going to gas up the car. I went out and decided to kill myself. He said, I thought I can't handle this, I can't face this. And I thought I'd do it by driving into a power station, exploding the car, and nobody would really know what had happened. But I was driving, and I was crying and saying to myself, even God can't unscramble an egg. Even God can't unscramble an egg. And I was driving and got off the freeway onto a side road. I'm driving endlessly. And finally in the middle of the night, the car runs out of gas. And I don't know where I am. And I'm stumbling through some cow*

*pasture. I'm beyond tired, and I came to an abandoned building. I just fell on the floor – the windows were broken, the door was off its hinges, there were rats and mice. I didn't care. I lay on the ground and fell asleep.*

*"When I woke up in the morning, I found myself in an abandoned church, an abandoned and vandalized church. And the only thing that was still in that church was a crucifix on the front wall. The sun was shining on the crucifix, and I looked at the cross. And for the first time in my life, I understood the cross. I got it. He said, I was in hell, and God hadn't stopped loving me for one second. And he was fingering a cross around his neck. I will always wear a cross. I was in hell and God hadn't stopped loving me for one second. I can live beyond what I have done. I'm not proud of what I did, it will always be something I carry, but I can live beyond what I have done. I had kept saying to myself even God can't unscramble an egg. But God doesn't have to unscramble an egg. If we get the cross, we can live beyond any egg we have ever scrambled."*

Like Ignatius with his gimpy leg and smashed ego; like the man who saw the cross on the wall in the abandoned church, God enters in and transforms us where we are fragile and vulnerable. Then and only then can we live beyond any egg we have ever scrambled.

**Blessed are all of you who believe that what was spoken to you by the Lord will be fulfilled**

**Merry Christmas Everyone!**