

Fourth Sunday of Advent – 2021 – Avon & Stour

A Loud Cry. Do you know someone who may have a bit of an issue with snoring? Perhaps you are that person? At a recent physio session, Sue suggested I tape up my mouth at night-time. **(1)** Apparently, when we breathe through our noses oxygen levels lift significantly. Most people will wake up feeling like a spring chicken! In addition, no snoring! This tape is special. It's not available at Boots. Only available online at chadwick.com. One draw-back of applying the tape is you're not able to speak - some might consider this a blessing during the day??

Advent and Lent are given to us as a time to tape up our mouths, to stop talking so God can talk. Today we are told that when Elizabeth **HEARD** Mary's Spirit-filled greeting she, herself, was filled with the Holy Spirit. She heard and was filled. Then, under the same Divine influence herself, she cried out – loudly - in praise of God present in Jesus.

At least two lessons here. First, the activity of really listening. It is the first crucial step to receive the Holy Spirit. The commitment to truly listen involves more than our ears. It involves our whole disposition, our hearts, where our desires live. Do I want to receive God's Spirit? If I do, I will hear God speak, first in His Word. Do we realise God actually speaks to us at Mass? The Holy Spirit is also revealed when we listen to each other. That happened to Elizabeth through Mary. God also speaks to each of our hearts if we stop, even for a moment, to listen in prayer. Are you listening?

The second lesson concerns what we do after we hear God speak. Elizabeth again. **(2)**

'.....Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and cried out with a loud voice, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb..."'

Elizabeth **CRIED OUT** praising God for the yet to be born Jesus present in Mary. She did it loudly! Now is the time to rip off the tape of our self-consciousness, our fears, our anxieties, everything that holds us back, to declare, loudly, how blessed we are in the Lord. Whatever is going on in our lives, God is good, God has our backs. God has been beyond generous to us. He has given us His very Self who continues to be revealed in Word and Sacrament to bless and reassure us. Are you crying out in praise of God?

A couple of weeks ago I went to Tesco's. As I was leaving the exit, I could see a Mum tightly holding the hand of her young son, about 7 years old, as they passed a chap selling the 'Big Issue'. The man asked mum whether she would like to buy a copy. "No thank you," she said firmly. Immediately the little man said to him, "But you can have these!", handing him a fistful of Tesco vouchers; a glimpse of heaven. Instinctively, without hesitation the lad gave what he had.

Citizens of heaven do that, giving without any thought of return, because that is what happens in heaven. Are you a citizen of heaven? I cannot think of better way to praise God this Christmas than to give an outrageously generous gift to someone you don't even know. Bring heaven down to the earth. Be remarkable, **be Christ** this Christmas!

Luke 1:39ff



‘.....Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and cried out with a loud voice, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb...”’