

“...the infant in my womb leaped for joy!”

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Once upon a time, at night, a man stood all alone on a deserted hilltop.

*It was one of those memorable nights when ...stars fill the sky,
...love fills the heart, &
...peace fills the soul.*

As the man stood there, waves of joy swept over him. He felt like someone listening to a magnificent symphony. All the notes exploded triumphantly, harmonizing in such a way, that they made the heart burst with emotion!

Then, oddly, the man began to sense the presence of another... there... on the hilltop... with him. Gradually, the presence of this ‘other’ grew so intense, that it actually became more real to him than his own presence. Amidst this, the man did not feel frightened or threatened.

Later, the man said, **“That night... on that hilltop ...my true faith in God was born.”**

Psychologists refer to such a moment as a **‘peak’** moment. A **‘peak’** moment is a time when, for a brief instant, we glimpse another world that is infinitely bigger, infinitely more beautiful, and infinitely more real than the world in which we live.

I shared that man’s **‘hilltop experience’** with you because it helps us better appreciate the story I just read to you from Luke’s Gospel. Specifically, it helps us to better appreciate what Elizabeth meant when she said to her cousin, Mary,

“..the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.”

It is not unusual for a baby to move while inside its mother. However, the author of this Gospel, St Luke, intends for us to realize that this movement, this ‘leap’ of the baby, John, was **not** an ordinary movement, **BUT** that it was an **extra**ordinary movement. It was in response to the proximity of the baby, Jesus, in Mary, **his** mother’s womb. Elizabeth’s baby, John, even in the unborn state, sensed Jesus’ presence and, **“leaped for joy,”** as Scripture put it.

Now, this is important because the leaping of John, in Elizabeth’s womb, previews something that will happen time and again in Jesus’ life.

Just what, exactly, does this preview that will happen time and again in Jesus’ lifetime, you ask.

Well, of course, ‘I am glad you asked that question!’

Simply put, it previews **the powerful impact Jesus will have on people.**

I now give you 2 such examples.

1st, it took place on the Sea of Galilee early-on in the ministry of Jesus. Simon Peter, the 1st 'pope-to-be' **and** the '1st denier-of-Jesus,' had just returned from an 'all-nighter' of **'fruitless fishing.'** Jesus, apparently uninvited, stepped into their boat and told them to push back, out into deeper water. Then, when they had done this, he told them to lower their nets.

"Simon Peter said in reply, 'Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, BUT, at your command, I will lower the nets.'

When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing.... when Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, 'Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.' " Lk. 5:5-6, 8

In other words, in that **brief** moment, Peter sensed the 'holiness of Jesus' in a way he had never done so before. It was a **'peak'** moment.

2nd, it took place one day when Jesus went up the mountain to pray. With him, he took Peter, James, and John. Suddenly, Jesus' face began to **'shine like the sun'** and a cloud covered him.

"From the cloud, came a voice that said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.'
When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate and were very much afraid." Mt. 17:5-6

For a **brief** moment, Peter, James, and John experienced a dimension of Jesus they had never experienced before. It was a **'peak'** moment... and one they would **never** forget.

Many people still experience, today, what the pre-natal John experienced in his mother, Elizabeth's womb, what pre-papal Peter experienced at the seashore, what the three disciples, priests-to-be, experienced of the Transfigured-Jesus on the mountain (Tabor).

Hear me when I say: such an experience of Jesus **cannot** be engineered. It **cannot** be programmed. It **cannot** be 'wished-for-into-existence.' **NOTHING** can make it happen. It can happen only of its own accord. It is a gift from God. All we can do is dispose ourselves to receive the gift.

And **THAT**, my friends, is what Advent is for: to prepare ourselves, or better put, to **DISPOSE** ourselves for the coming of Christ ...into our lives. You may never experience Jesus with the same intensity that the pre-natal-John did in the womb or that the pre-papal-Peter did at the seashore or that the 3, pre-priest, disciples did on Mount Tabor or, even as I do, at the words of the Consecration (the Transubstantiation) in every Mass I celebrate.

BUT ...we know this much for sure: if we **DISPOSE** ourselves for the coming of Jesus into our lives, especially in Communion, the day **WILL** come when, indeed, we will experience his presence as never before.

On **that** day, it won't be a faint, fleeting, 'peak-moment-experience.' It will be an intense, lasting experience. It will be a face-to-face experience with Jesus in heaven. And on **that** day, we will **KNOW**... first-hand, of what St. Paul meant when he wrote:

"Eye has not seen...ear has not heard...what God has planned for those who love him." 1Cor. 2:9-10

Don't you **dare** let a long line of traffic, a broken Christmas ornament, or a few unwrapped presents rob you of the love of the Christ-child that belongs in your heart.

Keep things in perspective. Keep a worthy attitude. And just, plain...cool it!
(**AND**... If that means having a little glass of wine [or 2] in my-honor... then so be it!)

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you... the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.