

Advent and Christmas 2012

Deanery of Sudbury/Manitoulin



"The Visitation of St. Elizabeth to the Virgin Mary"

by Mariotto Albertinelli (1474-1515)

".....and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the child leaped 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?" Luke 1:

Dear People of God,

In this beautiful painting by the fourteenth century artist Mariotto Albertinelli, Elizabeth reaches out to Mary as they meet under a large arch, representing something new entering history through the womb. In the painting Elizabeth's one arm stretches to embrace Mary and her other hand gently clasps Mary's. Mary appears afraid as we notice her holding up one hand to her breast, as if to protect her trembling heart. She need not have been afraid because the expression on Elizabeth's face is one of tenderness and reassurance. As their eyes meet, any doubts are dispelled, and in that moment of communion there is understanding and a meeting of hearts.

Amidst all the turmoil and uncertainty around her, in this encounter, Mary has found someone who can share what she is feeling. Elizabeth is the one who can help Mary make sense of what is happening to her, who can bless her, comfort her, embrace her, console her and name the gift that lies beneath her heart. It is a very human picture but it speaks to us of divine grace and of God's presence in the midst of an everyday encounter between two women.

In this season of Advent and Christmas, I pray that you will experience the same blessings and consolations in your encounters with family and friends, and those who have a special claim on your heart, as Mary did in hers with Elizabeth. Be open to those moments of grace, however fleeting they may be. May they be reminders that God is always present in us and through us, and is often in places we least expect to find God.

Thank you for all the ways in which you have been instruments of God's love in your homes, churches, and places of work and recreation this year. I know I speak on behalf of all the clergy in our deanery who are grateful for the time you give and the talent you share in so many ways in your congregations.

May God's joy fill your hearts this Advent and Christmas and throughout the New Year,

Anne Germond

(Archdeacon: Sudbury/Manitoulin)

