Some of you know that my mom has 7 siblings and they are scattered all over the world. Some are in western Canada and some are in Hong Kong. As you would imagine, I have many many cousins, 13 to be exact and that’s only coming from my mother’s side. When I was a child, I grew up with a few of my cousins. We played together, we ate together, and we stayed over at each other’s houses. We were more than cousins to each other. We were like brothers and sisters.

Even though we’ve grown older now and are separated oceans apart, we may see each other less often but we are still bonded together for life. The special bond and the time that we shared with one another are truly priceless. In our New Testament reading that we read earlier, we also saw a similar kind of bonding and love that are being shared from one cousin to another. The younger cousin Mary was visiting her much older cousin Elizabeth, ironically despite their wide age gap, both of them were expecting a child only a few months apart.

Both of them were NOT supposed to be expecting a child. One was physiologically too old to bear a child and the other was simply too young. How could this be possible, one may ask? Well, from our human perspective this was a mystery and a miracle from God. But with God, all things are possible!

Imagine what was going through the minds of these two women? Despite their great difference in their age, both of these women knew that they were carrying not just their own child but a miracle child from God. They both accepted their special callings and their roles with great **Fear** - fear of being rejected and ostracized by their community or their own husband and husband to be. But that fear also came with great **Joy** and **Honor**, in taking part of God’s salvific plan for humanity. God chose to engage Mary and Elizabeth directly through the work of the Holy Spirit. Their ordinary lives were inconvenient but because of their great faith and courage, they obliged to carry out this honored duty to bear God’s son and his prophet. During this time of uncertainties and confusions, both Elizabeth and Mary made each other accountable on each other’s strength, encouragements and supports.

Our gospel text today is centered around Mary’s famous song the ***Magnificat*** which means “**magnified**” in Latin. It was one of the ancient Christian hymns sung by the church, especially among the Roman Catholic communities even to this day.

Considering the context and the circumstances of the situation, this Canticle of Mary could very well be a song of fear and anguish, but gave this expecting teenager mother credits for her courage and faith in turning it into a song of praise, exultation, and worship. She sung about how honored she would be for being chosen by God for this special purpose, to bear God’s Son here on earth.

***“My soul magnifies the Lord! And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant, for the Mighty one has done great things for me, and holy is his name.”*[[1]](#footnote-1)** What a “magnificent” song of praise and a great expression of joy!

Through the noble giving of herself for God’s purpose, Mary testified to the rest of humanity that God was able to accomplish much, even with what was considered humanly impossible. **God chooses ordinary people in order to accomplish extra-ordinary tasks!** **God undergirds great expectations out of unexpected and challenging circumstances!**

As the angel declared, ***"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.”***

Over the years, many biblical scholars have analyzed this event through a sociological lens. Many consider this event as a major social breakthrough through this unwedded teenage mother-to-be and this child who would “*bring down the powerful from their thrones, lift up the lowly, fill the hungry, and send the rich away empty…”[[2]](#footnote-2)* This child was sent on a Divine mission to restore social order, to right the system of injustice and abuses of this world.

Through God’s providence, the seeds of faith and courage have been planted in the wombs of this unwedded teenager and this elderly woman so that the Messiah and his Messenger were to be born.

Even in the midst of these unusual circumstances and challenges in life, God still chose Mary and Elizabeth to fulfill God’s plan for human salvation. Imagine what God can and will do in challenging each of us here today in this room, however old or young we may be; women or men; singles, married or divorced; employed, seeking a new job, or retired? **God’s purpose often leads to the reversal of human values, exalting the poor and dethroning the mighty. God invites us to see things beneath the surface and out of the ordinary. God invites us to challenge the status quo, the social norm and to re-think how we might do things differently and better, all for the sake of God’s glory and His name.**

Through Mary and Elizabeth’s extraordinary faith and courage, we have been inspired to confront our personal fears, struggles, and doubts with confidence and faith. In this Advent song of praise, Mary has challenged us to magnify God’s reconciling grace and missional work, so others may also experience the fullness of God’s Love, Joy, and Peace, and Hope as well. God will send us the gift of spiritual encouragement and accountability through unexpected friends and companions, just like Mary and Elizabeth.

Our Old Testament passage earlier from the prophet Isaiah also provided us with another glimpse of the forth shadowing Messiah and the kingdom that is to come.

According to Luke, when Jesus was handed the scroll in the synagogue, he stood up and took center-stage for the very first time. Without hesitation, he began reading this very same passage from Isaiah. This was Jesus’s “coming out” moment, so to speak. All eyes and attention fixed upon that boy. Who was he? Was he not the son of the carpenter Joseph? No, he’s the son of God. He was the long-expected Savior as prophesied by Isaiah. Isaiah’s prophecy of the coming Messiah being fulfilled right before their eyes.

This coming Messiah would *“bring good news to the oppressed, bind up the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, and set the prisoners free.”[[3]](#footnote-3)* The presence of the LORD will be magnified through Him and all around those who proclaim his name.

Throughout this Advent season, we are reminded that **God invites those who rest marginally, on the fringe of society like Mary and Elizabeth, to be at the center of God’s salvific plan for humanity.** The light of Christ guides people from all corners of the earth, to come to the manger to worship Him once again….not in some royal palace in Jerusalem but a lowly manger in a little town called Bethlehem, which means the “House of Bread”. This was how the long-expected Messiah is to be born, so let it be, so let it be!

This season of Advent announces to the world, through the incarnation of the Word, a new order is about to begin. A new kingdom will soon arrive and a new reversal of order will be established with the coming Messiah.

Behold, God is doing a new thing through those who are oppressed, humbled and lowly. Nothing will ever be the same again. Through Christ, God is offering us something that we can anchor our faith onto. God promises that He would remain faithful to all those who trust in Him. God’s name shall remain magnified and be glorified once again! God alone is worthy to be praised!

This is the heart of the message of Advent, that we shall rejoice and proclaim God’s name against all odds. We shall continue to praise God by placing God where He belongs, not on the fringe or the margins of society, but in the center of our hearts. Like Mary the mother-to-be, we are all impregnated with God’s promise of a new kingdom to come where the “powerful were to be brought down from their throne, the lowly be lifted up, the hungry will be filled and the rich will be emptied. This we shall patiently wait and eagerly long for in your “Unexpected Expectation.”

*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called* ***Wonderful Counselor****,* ***Mighty God****,* ***Everlasting Father****,* ***Prince of Peace****[[4]](#footnote-4)* who was, is and is to come. In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Luke 1:46-49* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Luke 1:52-53* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Isaiah 61:1* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Isaiah 9:6 (KJV)* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)