

PARISHES OF
ST PIUS X, ALDERLEY EDGE, ST BENEDICT'S, HANDFORTH
AND
SACRED HEART & ST TERESA'S WILMSLOW
WEEKLY REFLECTION

Sunday 7th December 2025: Second Sunday of Advent
The Expectations of Mary, Daughter of Joachim and Anna (2)

This week I continue with a reflection which imagines what may have been going through the mind of Mary as she awaited the birth of her son, our Saviour Jesus Christ....

...Two months later, when I could feel my boy moving within me, my mum said to me, "It is time for you and Joseph to go to Elizabeth." Joseph placed me upon a donkey and we set off downhill to the Jordan Valley. It was a fertile area full of farms, and the safest way to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, there were brigands about and rebels against the occupation of Palestine, and so Joseph walked ahead with a group of men to make sure that the way was safe. As we went on our way I thought of Him who lay in my womb.

One day I walked with the others and thought to myself; 'I may be the walking womb of the Christ child today but He himself will walk up to Jerusalem on many occasions as the Messiah, the Son of the Most High, preaching and teaching and leading His people. But would they all follow Him? Would they? Would that they would.'

"When will we get to Jerusalem?", I asked Joseph. "Tomorrow afternoon," he replied. I went to sleep thinking of Jerusalem and through the night excitement and the image of the Holy City mingled in my mind. Mount Zion, the Heavenly Jerusalem, the City of God, the Temple, the Ark of the Covenant, the Holy of Holies all flashed before my mind and mingled and jumbled in my mind's eye.

Next day we climbed and climbed for hours until eventually we came over the crest of the Mount of Olives and there in all its splendour on the hill opposite was the Holy City. We descended into the valley and walked through the garden of Gethsemani. We paused at the Kedron River to shake the dust off our clothes and to purify ourselves in the water, before entering the city. Just outside the gate we passed a hillock on which there were crosses and a rebel against the occupation of Palestine hung dying. I shuddered at the site and my baby seemed to stir.

We went straight to the Temple to pray and thank God for our safe Journey. We had to queue so I said to Joseph, "what's wrong?" And he replied, "we have to wait in line to get our shekels changed into temple money so that we can buy a sacrifice." We got so little for our shekels that we could only afford to buy a small pigeon to offer in sacrifice in

thanksgiving for our safe journey. Standing on the Holy Ground I thought how life had changed for me in such a short time. I always bore God in my heart and in my mind. My prayer was the prayer of God, in which I knew that I was in union with Him. Every breath that I breathed was a prayer, every thought was a reflection of God's will although, being only human, I could be angry with God when He seemed to lead me down a blind alley; like when he left me alone to explain my pregnancy to Mum, Dad and Joseph. It was not easy for me at all. You see everyone got married at a young age and it was very strange for a young girl to have a baby before being married. It did happen and people did not understand and they would not treat such a girl well. She might have to live somewhere else until the baby was born. It was no wonder Mum and Dad were pleased to send me to Elizabeth. They knew Joseph and I would be married there and return home as a married couple.

Joseph interrupted me from my distractions and wandering thoughts and said we must go. I briefly finished my prayers and went with him to an upper room known to the family. We ate there and slept on the floor. The boy Jesus slept well in his home within me and in his Holy City.

The next day we travelled the short journey to Ein Kareem and what an occasion it was! Elizabeth was seated in the shade on the stone outside her door and I recognised her from her age and the fact that she was near her time. She quickly saw us too, for jumping to her feet and clasping her motherhood she rushed towards us, overbrimming with joy as she exclaimed to me, "Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears the child in my womb leapt for joy." And I, remembering the words of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, said joyfully;

"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
because he has looked upon His lowly handmaiden.
From this day forward all generations will call me blessed.
The Almighty works marvels for me - Holy is his name.
His mercy is from age to age on those who fear him.
He casts the mighty from their thrones and raises the lowly.
He fills the starving with good things, sends the rich away empty.
He protects Israel, his servant, remembering his mercy, the mercy promised to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his sons for ever."

Elizabeth and Zachariah celebrated our arrival. The next day Joseph and I were married before the priest Zachariah in accordance with our beloved Jewish rituals. I loved the Jewish tradition, the Jewish ceremonies we practised, the way we prayed together and stayed together as families. I liked particularly the Passover prayers we said every Friday evening, remembering God leading us from Egypt, in preparation for the Sabbath. I would bring up my boy Jesus to love his Jewishness as well.

The ceremony over, we knelt in thanksgiving to the Lord. Now we were married to each other, but centrally we were married to God.

We celebrated with Elizabeth's neighbours and enjoyed special foods and wine and danced and sang. I did not dance out of regard for my child but it did not stop me singing. I particularly liked singing 'By the Rivers of Babylon.'

The next day, Joseph said, "you will stay to help Elizabeth but I must return to my workshop. I will come back for you in a few months."

Not long after Elizabeth gave birth to John, Joseph did return. He had missed me, he said. So we returned to Nazareth to await the advent of my boy child Jesus, who would be the Christ.

Kevin H.