

December 23, 2023



Daily Reflections

MAKE ROOM IN YOUR SOUL

By Sr. Bernie Inocencio, CSJ

Excerpts from Today's Readings

Thus says the Lord GOD: Lo, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me...

And the messenger of the covenant whom you desire. Yes, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

But who will endure the day of his coming? And who can stand when he appears?

For he is like the refiner's fire, or like the fuller's lye.

He will sit refining and purifying silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi, refining them like gold or like silver that they may offer due sacrifice to the Lord.

MALACHI 3:1-3

Your ways, O Lord, make known to me; teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior.

PSALM 25:4-5AB

He asked for a tablet and wrote, "John is his name," and all were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing God.

Then fear came upon all their neighbors, and all these matters were discussed throughout the hill country of Judea. All who heard these things took them to heart, saying, "What, then, will this child be? For surely the hand of the Lord was with him."

LUKE 1:63-66

Reflection

Zechariah could not speak after the message from the angel announced that he would have a child in his old age. He was stunned to the point of disbelief. And because of that, God gave him a gift, a gift of silence. Nine months. It took nine months before Zechariah could speak again. What were his thoughts in those nine months of silence? What happened within him?

Nine months may be enough to clear the cobwebs in one's thoughts, the clutter in one's soul. Sure, Zechariah doubted and feared. He and Elizabeth had prayed for a child for a long time. It had been a long time since he learned Elizabeth was barren. Though devout and righteous, he had given up the thought of having a child. Yet now came the answer to his prayer, a prayer he had forgotten he prayed. The message came just at the time he was offering incense at the altar. Isn't that moment significant for Zechariah? Our prayers, our eyes directed to God, are like the smoke from the incense that ascended to heaven. In hindsight, Zechariah might have thought that as he lit the incense and the smoke rose, his prayer had gone up to heaven and had been heard. From that realization, he reflected on his life.

There was never a day that he was not amazed as he saw Elizabeth's stomach growing. Mary, Elizabeth's cousin, came to visit and sang her praises to God. Zechariah heard her recall all the good things God had done and the salvation that God had promised. Zechariah was moved by Mary's Magnificat, and he also began to reflect and remember the goodness of God. He recalled the promise of a Messiah proclaimed by the prophets.

Zechariah's heart was softened. Slowly God broke the cobwebs that cluttered the mind and the soul. Slowly room was made for God. Zechariah learned God's ways. God's words began to take root. His disbelief became confidence in God. His fear was replaced with a strong resolve. He accepted that his son John (which means "graced by God" in Hebrew) would be the forerunner for the

Messiah. He understood that John would help cleanse and purify the hearts of many to make room for the Messiah. Zechariah made room for God. John, in the future, would also make room for God, the Messiah. Zechariah's heart was filled with hope and was bursting with praise for God. When he finally declared John's name to the people, he was moved to burst into song.

The whole season of Advent calls us to make room for God and the Good News. In silence, we make a space for God. In silence, our sense of the presence of God increases, our hearts can truly pray, our minds and our hearts gain clarity.



Stella Maris Seal Beach Initial Formation Retreat
Photo by Sr. Bernie Inocencio, CSJ

For Pondering

- Are there any areas in your life that need to be uncluttered or uncrowded so the words of God can sprout in your soul?
 - How have you made room for Jesus this Christmas?
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For Prayer

*O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of law:
Uncrowd my heart until silence speaks in your still, small voice.
Turn me from the hearing of words, and the making of words,
and the confusion of much speaking,
to listening, waiting, stillness, silence.
Amen.*

ADAPTED FROM ESTHER DE WAAL'S "LOST IN WONDER"

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