

## HOMILY – CHRISTMAS – 25 DECEMBER 2015

As we sing wonderful Christmas carols, we have the ancient four canticles of Luke's Gospel. Were they sung or said?

The Angel Gabriel appears to ZECHARIAH while rostered on duty for days at a time, in the sanctuary of the Lord. We pray for all rostered workers and those working away at great distance from family and home.

Gabriel tells him not to be afraid; their prayer is answered; his wife ELIZABETH will bear a son, and he must be named John. Though a good man, Zechariah freezes.

He doesn't dare to believe, so goes mute.

Fr Gerry asks if that has ever happened to us, some nod.

How often do we lose our voice when it is time to speak and act?

After his days of service, Zechariah goes home and Elizabeth conceives. Zechariah is still mute. Elizabeth is very grateful to God for the pregnancy. In the 6th month, angel Gabriel appears in Nazareth to MARY, a virgin who is betrothed to Joseph.

Gabriel says not to be afraid, Mary will conceive a son through the power of God. Mary asks how. Also she is told her kinswoman; Elizabeth is in her 6th month.

Mary says 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word'. Fr Gerry speaks of the incredible trust and courage and faith of Mary – truly an inspiration to us. The Angel leaves her.

In those days, Mary sets out from the north, to a Judean town in the hill country in the south, and enters Elizabeth's house.

Fr Gerry invites two community members to act out the roles of Mary and Elizabeth.

The child in Elizabeth's womb leaps for joy and Elizabeth knows why. Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit.

Mary responds with the 1st CANTICLE of Christmas, which today we call the Magnificat. She praises God.

Mary remains about three months, and then returns home.

Now the time comes for Elizabeth to give birth to John.

Eight days later, John is presented for circumcision. Zechariah names him John, and his speech returns.

Zechariah responds with the 2nd CANTICLE of CHRISTMAS. He praises God.

Then the census is called. Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem.

Mary gives birth. We know the story well. Our crib in the church shows the story.

The Angel appears to shepherds living in the fields and watching over the sheep at night.

The Angel tells them do not be afraid, and brings good news to them. We think of the night-shift workers in our community, also the lowly paid members of society. God chooses them to hear the message from the angel. We also think of many in our world who are paid so poorly, as we think of the shepherds.

The Angel joined by heavenly army, singing the 3rd CANTICLE of CHRISTMAS - Giving glory to God. Presents are brought forward from our SVDP and WAG groups, accompanied by children dressed as shepherds and magi.

Shepherds visit Jesus and return glorifying and praising God.

Eight days after his birth, at the circumcision, the baby is named Jesus.

Simeon, a respected elder, takes Jesus in his arms and says the 4th CANTICLE of CHRISTMAS.

He praises God. Another respected elder, Anna praised God too.

From Luke's Gospel, we learn about the adults Elizabeth and Zechariah, Mary and Joseph, Simeon and Anna, about married adults and single adults.

Matthew's Gospel tells us more about Joseph, and introduces all people of learning from the cultures of the world, symbolized by the Magi following the star to Jesus.

We too ask how our learning, our skills, our work habits, interests and lifestyle LEAD us to Jesus.

THIS CHRISTMAS AS WE SHARE GIFTS, WE ACT IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE POOR AND THE REFUGEES.

THE GREATEST GIFT IS JESUS GIVEN TO US AS OUR SAVIOUR.

THIS CHRISTMAS, from the FOUR CHRISTMAS CANTICLES of Mary, Zechariah, Angel / Heavenly Cast, And Simeon, we are SHOWN HOW TO PRAISE and TO HUMBLY GIVE THANKS TO GOD.

WE have journeyed as a parish, in last month through a wonderful variety of ceremonies:

- + our primary school's St Joey's Joyful Carols
- + the carol services of the many schools where our children attend
- + the Aboriginal (Murri) Ecumenical Christmas Service hosted in our church.
- + Sunday night parish Christmas Carols and Supper.

+ the traditional novena Filipino Christmas Mass Simbang Gabi (Misa de gallo)

We pray for the South Sudan water projects, and a new project seeking to support a rural parish drought stricken in Queensland.

We thank God for the two schools and two community groups who have supported our local St Vincent De Paul Society with hampers.

We remember our parish Justice Group which coordinated hampers for prisoners' families.

We are grateful to our local Prayer groups who pray for us.

We rejoice in the newly established Catholic University in northern Iraq.

We pray for peace in our world, knowing we must act for PEACE.

WE PRAISE GOD.

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – Homily – Christmas – 25 December 2015]