

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Dec 19th 2015

Elizabeth Remembers the Story

Do not be afraid, Zechariah

"How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years."
But now you will be speechless and unable to talk until the day these things take place,
because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled at their proper time.
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.

I identify with Zechariah in this important story.

Zechariah is told the good news that he and his wife will have a child, even though it is quite unlikely. And, because he is unopen to the way "nothing is impossible with God," he becomes mute - unable to speak. But, when he can affirm his faith in the marvel of the fulfillment of God's word and say the name of his child, "John" - meaning "God is Gracious" - Zachariah proclaims the good news.

I can, at times, become unable to proclaim the good news of God's love and mercy, or of the challenging call for justice and a more integral care for one another and our planet, because I can't imagine how God will make all this turn out. The word gets stuck in my throat and my heart loses the courage to speak because I become afraid by the lingering doubts - doubts of God's ultimate love and fidelity and God's presence and promise to be with us always. And the fire of the Holy Spirit is extinguished.

However, when I can open my eyes and see that God is indeed faithful, and I can say "God is Gracious!" with all my heart, the fear vanishes and the courage returns and I can speak the good news.

Praying with this story can free all of our tongues to proclaim the good news of God's gracious and merciful love, especially as we begin this year of mercy.

Dear Mary, place us with your son, Jesus, on this Advent journey. Plead for us that we might have a portion of his heart, in fidelity, trust in the Father, and with a heart full of compassion. Lead us through the rest of this journey, all the way to the manger, so that we might see how this courageous fidelity was born in poverty and surrender to the Father's love.

Andy Alexander, S.J.-Creighton University's Collaborative Ministry Office