4 Advent 3 (Lk 1:39-45)

**THE VICTORY OF FAITH**

Elizabeth realised that Mary is specially blessed because she believed in the promises made to her by God. In a sense, this is all that Mary did, but what a task it was: to believe what she had come to know about herself from God despite all the evidence against it.

Mary's Magnificat follows immediately on our reading in Luke's gospel. If we listen closely, Mary tells us what her faith cost her.

God took over anything that she could have claimed as her own. Even so, our faith will annihilate all that is not from God in us, when we take the plunge and entrust our self to God.

Faith casts out every trace of pride in a person, every impulse towards power and self‑assertiveness, every element of self‑centredness.

We know that God has his plans for us, but we do not know what those plans are. God gets involved with a human being only after the person consents to God's plans. Then he shows “might in his arm.” He begins by destroying anything that stands in his way.

It's possible that we have been praying for a long time, “Father, I commit my whole life to you. Don't spare me but make me who you want me to be.” That is a very courageous prayer. But let’s be careful that what we are really saying is, “Make me who I think you want me to be,” or “Make me who I want to be, because I’m sure that must be who you want me to be.” God is patient with our self‑centredness. He leads us to realise that we do not know who he wants us to be, and we begin to submit freely, perhaps not without fear, to being purified of self.

Mary submitted to this radical purification, and showed her absolute faith in the words God spoke to her. The process runs directly opposite to many things that we desire, seek, plan, and work for, even with the best of intentions.

The Magnificat is the prayer of everyone who lives by faith. It calls for an end to my reliance on man‑made power, importance, and efficiency. It announces the death of me as I want to be, and replacement by one whom God will create with his own strong arm.

This is what happened to Mary, and the crowning glory of God's strong arm was her Assumption. If each of us allows God's power to work in us, if we allow our faith in God's word to take over our lives, then we will come to resemble Mary, the lowly handmaid raised to the glory of God's presence.