

## Advent Sunday Week 4 - Luke 1:39-45

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What a story of recognition this Sunday's gospel is. I can't help but imagine the great vulnerability that exists between these two women, that Elizabeth could understand the truth of Mary's experience from the moment she spoke. Two women, coming together to name the grace they see not only happening within themselves but within one another. Two women, of shared experience offering encouragement for the perhaps scary road ahead.

My favorite depiction of this scene is the Windsock Visitation by Brother Mickey McGrath, OSFS. Elizabeth and Mary gleefully embrace one another, their pregnant bellies touching and seemingly intermingling. Alongside them is a quote from Jane de Chantal: "This is the place of our delight and rest." Their joy shocks me every time in the most wonderful way.

I can imagine their fear so much more easily. Pregnancy is a time of great change in one's body, and so much change happening so quickly can be disorienting. Am I still the same person? Is this still the same me? Really? Are you sure? I asked these questions of myself a lot during my time as a volunteer. Things were changing fast, and at times the old me felt distant, almost like another life entirely, and that distance scared me.

This image reminds me to breathe in the joy of change. When we are deep in the trenches of transition and growth, it can be difficult to see the transformation taking place within us. Sometimes it might even feel like we're not growing at all. Maybe it just feels like we're barely getting by. These are moments that community can buoy us. It can offer us a sense of being seen or known or recognized while affirming the great grace that's happening within us even as we change.

This source of community might be your volunteer community, who like Elizabeth and Mary, are of shared experience. But it might also be those you work with or a faith community you've found or those who have known you beyond this year. Wherever you find your place of delight and rest, I pray that they reflect back to you the glory and grace of all you are becoming and that you in turn might be a mirror too.

### Prayer

Mother God, you too have witnessed us growing. Share in our joy and struggles as we go forward. May our growth lead us ever closer to the person you are calling us to be, even when we are unsure where this path will lead us. And in this season of transition, may we find a home among those who allow us to delight and to rest.

Amen

### Suggestions for Service

Many in our communities often go without this sense of recognition and the dignity it brings with it. This is particularly true among those facing homelessness, folks struggling with severe mental illness, and the elderly. Take an evening to volunteer at a soup kitchen or spend an afternoon at an assisted living center. Seek to reflect the dignity of those you encounter back to them. If you're unable to find an opportunity like this, spend some time researching advocacy efforts going on in your community and find ways to get involved.