

## **Mary and Elizabeth Show Us What Matters**

Good morning, brothers and sisters!

Here we are, the 4th Sunday of Advent! Christmas is just around the corner. Let us take a moment to refocus. Today, the Church gives us the story of **Mary and Elizabeth**, two holy women who truly understood what Christmas is all about. And spoiler alert: it's not about the cookies, the gifts, or how perfectly your nativity scene is arranged. **It's about Him—Jesus, the reason for the season.**

### **“Let's Get the Birthday Party Right”**

Now, let's talk about birthdays. Imagine throwing a birthday party for your best friend, but instead of inviting them, you invite everyone else. The house is decorated, there's cake, music, and gifts, but the guest of honor is missing. It wouldn't feel right, would it?

That's what happens when we get so caught up in the holiday madness that we forget to invite Jesus to His own birthday party. We're great at singing “Happy Birthday” to everyone else, but when it comes to the Lord's birthday, some of us are no-shows at Mass!

Let me put it plainly: Christmas without the Mass is like a cake without icing, a tree without lights, or Santa without Rudolph—it just doesn't make sense!

## **Mary and Elizabeth Show Us What Matters**

In today's Gospel, we hear about Mary visiting Elizabeth. It's a beautiful scene. Mary isn't worried about wrapping gifts or how her hair looks after traveling all that way. She's focused on one thing: sharing the joy of Jesus. Elizabeth recognizes it right away. Even baby John the Baptist is doing backflips in his mom's womb! That's what happens when you're in the presence of the Lord.

Mary teaches us that the most important preparation for Christmas isn't decorating our homes but preparing our hearts. Elizabeth shows us the joy of welcoming Jesus into our lives. Together, they remind us that the best way to celebrate Christmas is to focus on *Him*.

### **“Mass Is the Ultimate Christmas Celebration”**

Now, I know what some of you are thinking: “But Father, I have so much to do on Christmas morning!” Yes, I get it. The presents need to be unwrapped, the turkey needs to be basted, and Grandma's coming over at noon. But here's the thing: Christmas Mass isn't just one more thing to squeeze into your schedule. It's the *thing*.

Think of it this way: Christmas is Jesus' birthday, and the Mass is His party. It's where we gather as His family, listen to His story, and receive the most incredible gift—Himself in the Eucharist. Skipping Mass on Christmas is like leaving the party before the cake is served!

*“Mass? But we’re already so busy! Can’t we just livestream it?”*

Let me tell you: Jesus didn’t livestream His birth from heaven. He came down in person, in all the messiness of a stable, because He wanted to be *with us*. The least we can do is show up in person for Him.

### **“How to Truly Prepare for Christmas”**

So here’s my Advent challenge for you: Between now and Christmas, take a moment to pause. Forget the wrapping paper, the lights, and even the cookies (okay, maybe not the cookies). Ask yourself: *How am I preparing my heart for Jesus?*

And when Christmas morning comes, let’s all gather here at Mass to give thanks for the greatest gift of all: Emmanuel, God with us. Because the truth is, Christmas isn’t about what’s under the tree; it’s about who’s in the manger.

### **Conclusion**

Let’s make sure Jesus is the guest of honor in our hearts, our homes, and yes, at His Mass. Because when we celebrate the Lord’s birth the right way, with faith, love, and joy, we’ll find that everything else—yes, even the tangled lights—falls into place.

Merry (almost) Christmas!