

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (12/19-20/2009)

*Micah 5/1-4, Psalm 80, Hebrews 10/5-10, Luke 1/39-45*

Boy, it really gets dark early!

I hear a lot of people saying that these days, and they are right on.

The shortest day of the year is coming this week.

The one consolation we have is that, from this point on until late June, the daylight will be with us longer and longer each day. We hope it will mean more sun, right?

Many people find the gloom of our Midwest winters too much to bear.

If they can afford it, they are already gearing up for a trip to a warmer, brighter land.

Those who cannot get away are often very envious of these “snowbirds”, heading south or southwest, as the case may be.

In the halcyon days of my youth (long ago), I used to look forward to getting away to the Rockies, i.e., Aspen and Vail, for a week or ten days of wild skiing.

Atop the skiable mountains, the sun always seemed to be shining.

All of which brings us to today’s Scripture readings.

(You were thinking maybe it wouldn’t happen?)

The pregnant virgin Mary hurries to be with her relative, Elizabeth, who is already five to six months along, also in a very improbable pregnancy.

In fact, you might say that both women are “unusually” pregnant.

One is beyond child-bearing age; the other remains a virgin!

My image of their meeting is that of two women bringing light and life into each other’s life and the lives of people around them.

The two babies in their wombs (or at least one of them) leap in joyful greeting.

A very encouraging and pleasing scene, wouldn’t you say?

Does the Visitation bring light and life into your life this late December?

Can you allow yourself to feel some of the hope and joy of these two women, as concerned as they might have been over their pregnancies?

One of the most serene stops along the way when you go to Israel is at Ain-Karim, the place where this meeting reportedly took place.

The small, intimate church, the courtyard with its flowers and shrubs, the natural peacefulness of the place are a welcome change from the hustle and bustle of so many of the other stops.

I do hope that readers of this essay can find some quiet time and peacefulness (if not sunshine) in these last days before Christmas.

Take the example of Mary and Elizabeth as they - and you - prepare for the momentous occasion soon to come.

Allow the Lord to gift you with His own brand of sunlight and peace, for a child is to be born “...*whose greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth, he shall be peace!*”

### **He shall be peace!**

There’s a thought to brighten your day!

There’s a thought to challenge the world.

