**Scripture and Feast Day Notes**

**Sunday, August 19, 2018**

**From Today’s Readings**

**Zechariah 2:10-13** Preaching after the Jews’ return from their exile in Babylon (he himself was born in that exile), Zechariah is an apocalyptic visionary and his ministry hastened the rebuilding of the Temple. In these verses, in covenant language of choice and inheritance, he shares the Lord’s promise to dwell again among them, uniting land and people in holiness. *Discussion: “Shout and be glad,” the Lord proclaims (v.10) as He declares His return. How real is this message of hope to* you? *Enough to make you shout and jump for joy? If not, why not?*

**2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1** St. Paul exhorts the faithful of Corinth to consider themselves as temples of the living God. Since God has promised His return to dwell among us in a covenant of love and belonging, we need to purify ourselves in preparation for that day. *Discussion: What does it mean to you that you are the dwelling place of God, a temple of the living God (v.16)?*

**Luke 1: 39-56** After the angel Gabriel shares the news that the elderly Elizabeth is pregnant, Mary hastens to visit her. Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit at the sound of Mary’s greeting and her baby, who will be John the Baptist, “leaps in her womb.” Mary then joyfully sings what comes to be known as “the Magnificat” (after its first words in Latin translation) a song reminiscent of the one sung by Hannah upon hearing she would give birth to the prophet Samuel. Mary celebrates God’s mercy, His exalting of the lowly, and His overturning of human pride. *Discussion: Verse 37 is one of the most quoted New Testament verses “For nothing is impossible with God.” In what area of your life right now do you need to believe this is so? What keeps you from believing it?*

**Tuesday, August 21, is the Feast of Sts. Joachim & Anna**

Never mentioned by name in the Gospels, Mary’s parents’ story comes to us chiefly from an apocryphal gospel, the Infancy Gospel of James, written c. 145 AD. Early Christian gospels and letters focused on Jesus’ death and resurrection; later narratives reflected an interest in the birth and childhood of Jesus and his family. According to James, Joachim and Anna were a righteous and wealthy couple who were childless. The beautifully told account of their ordeal of rites and prayers to gain God’s favor and, finally, their daughter Mary, is one of passionate faith and touching human emotion. The couple promise her to the Temple out of gratitude, and turn her childhood bedroom into a “sanctuary” (Infancy Gospel of James 6:4) keeping her food, drink and habits faithful to ancient tradition. When Joachim advises they take her to the Temple when she is two, Anna convinces him (he promptly agrees) to wait a year so that they may be with her that much longer and their sweet girl not miss her parents. Theirs is a tender story, and, as always with our beloved saints, driven by love for and faith in God.