**Scripture and Feast Day Notes**

**Sunday, August 22, 2021**

**From Today’s Readings**

**Luke 1: 39-56** Upon hearing from the angel Gabriel that her cousin Elizabeth is pregnant, Mary hastens to visit her. At the sound of Mary’s voice, Elizabeth’s baby, who will be John the Baptist, “leaps in her womb” and Elizabeth herself is filled with the Holy Spirit and calls out in the surprise and overwhelming emotion of the moment: “Blessed are you and the child you will bear!!” Mary then joyfully sings a song celebrating God’s mercy, His exalting of the lowly, and His overturning of human pride. *Discuss/reflect: What quality of Mary’s faith is described in verse 45? Perhaps this is the most important characteristic of an apostle, the very one that was the basis for God’s calling Mary and the Twelve. Do* you *share in this quality?*

**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, he shares the Lord’s promise to dwell again among them, uniting land and people in holiness. *Discuss/reflect: “Shout and be glad,” the Lord proclaims (v.10) as He declares His return. In v.13, Zechariah asks us to “be still!” before God. Do both of these responses to His presence make sense to you? When and where do they figure in your life?*

**2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1** St. Paul quotes directly from the Old Testament laws of purification (Leviticus 26:12) and the prophets (Isaiah 52:11, Jeremiah 32:38, Ezekiel 37:27) in advising the faithful of Corinth: 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. *Discuss/reflect: What does it mean to you that you are the dwelling place of God, a temple of the living God (v.16)? How might this impact your behavior?*

**Tuesday, August 24, 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. 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, driven by love for and faith in God. *Reflection:*

*Consider these two humbly faithful saints; pray for the difficult task of parents across the globe.*

 *Department of Christian Education/Diocese of the Armenian Church of* *America/elisea@armeniandiocese.org**.*