

I checked a local weather report Tuesday night, and it said Cameron should expect “some snow” on Wednesday. I was prepared for a few flakes.

I always panic when it snows. My car is so light you could play hockey with it in weather like this. Some other people are afraid they might fall on the snow. Kids, however, rejoice in snow. It means no school. And it’s a free toy; God just gives it to them. There are endless ways to play with it. You can make snow angels, build forts, and catch it on your tongue. There’s nothing like it, and it’s gone after a short time. Snow reminds us that we are all one. Somebody lives in a fancier home than you do, has a bigger job than you do, makes better grades than you do, is better looking than you are, but no matter who you are, everybody gets the same snow. Those who are wealthy still have to get the sidewalks shoveled. Those who are poor get to play in it at no extra cost.

Everybody gets the same snow, and at Christmas everybody gets the same Savior. Whether your sins are great or small, whether your faith is strong or weak, you get the same Savior who rescues you from despair.

At a typical Sunday mass after the first reading we sing a responsorial psalm. Today’s response does not come from the Book of Psalms. Instead, we sing some verses from the Gospel of Luke. It’s a prayer called the Magnificat. According to Luke, after the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her she would bear a child by the power of the Holy Spirit, she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who was also expecting a child, even though she was too old to become pregnant. In that meeting, which we call the Visitation, Mary expressed how grateful she was to God for everything that was happening to her. In Mary’s eyes, she was not great, but God was great. She sings, “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”

The reason Mary was so grateful had as much to do with us as it did to do with her. She sings, “The Almighty has done great things for me, and he has mercy on those who fear him in every generation.” She explains, “God has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant.” The Magnificat is about reversals. Those who are rich get nothing special; those who are hungry get everything.

The third Sunday of Advent is traditionally called *Gaudete* Sunday, after the Latin word for “Rejoice!” On this Sunday we light the pink candle of the wreath, as a sign that Advent is half over and Christmas is drawing near. Advent reminds us to rejoice as we look forward to the great gift we receive each year at Christmas. God, who promised us mercy, sends us a Savior. No matter who you are or what you’ve done, even if you have committed sins that fill you with shame, God is anxious to rescue you and lift your spirits this Christmas, as Mary rejoiced in God’s mercy, and as children rejoice in snow.