

## JOYFUL ANTICIPATION

Echoing those words of Pope Francis that holiness is all about relationships and an invitation into an intimate relationship with Christ, today we see a beautiful example of human intimacy and in a very simple and loving manner. Mary greets her cousin Elizabeth, she who has just been



told she is with child, and after telling her beloved Joseph, races with urgency to see Elizabeth and today they meet, what joy, what love. But there is more than just two women greeting and joyfully sharing each other's news. John the Baptist, in Elizabeth's womb greets his Messiah, Jesus, and in their acknowledgement of each other the first missionaries of the Church are affirmed by the Holy Spirit. This intimate relationship gives them the courage to move forward in their personal lives and is what we all are hoping we have used these Advent days to make straight any roads that were leading us astray, allowing us in simple ways, like Elizabeth and Mary, to share moments of joy and love even in moments of despair.

As I imagine the joy in the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth, I am reminded of Antoine de Saint-Exupery's novella 'The Little Prince' and the joyful, intimate friendship that develops between the little prince stranded on an alien planet all alone and the friendship he develops with, of all things, a fox. They become great friends but one day they must part and the fox insists on knowing the exact time for their next meeting. The Prince reluctantly agrees to a definite day and time, 4 o'clock. When he presses the fox to tell him why he needs to know the exact time, the fox says, "If I know you are coming at 4 o'clock then at 3 o'clock I will begin to get excited."



Like the fox, we are excited about the coming joyful days ahead and the message of Christmas in two days. We also know that our intimate relationship with Jesus is not found in the stable in Bethlehem but rather in how we live our daily lives in holiness and wholeness as sisters and brothers in Christ. Yes, like the fox in the story of 'The Little Prince', we await with joy the arrival of another little Prince, the eternal Prince, our Messiah, no longer in need of swaddling clothes or a manger but rather hearts that are open and loving to that intimacy Pope Francis says we must find in every moment of our life.

May the joys of the gift of life and faith celebrated today inspire the coming Christmas Days with a new sense of knowing and living our intimate union with Jesus and our joyful response to willingly follow His example of loving service to all our sisters and brothers.

Fr. Ian Riswick

