

- “*Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.*” ...one of the most poignant of phrases in all the Scriptures...and one which applies not only to Mary, but to all of us.
- And what is spoken to us by the Lord? The Scriptures themselves, and the doctrinal teaching of the Church, which Jesus (God) assures He will lead into all truth, and that the gates of Hell will not prevail against.
- “Prevail” itself is an interesting word to use...because an enemy can make attacks, and even breakthroughs in a defensive line, such as at the Battle of the Bulge in WWII...but then, as now, enemy incursions do not signal victory.
- Likewise, as we have too often seen, the Enemy constantly makes his own incursions against the Church, but God Himself guarantees the ultimate victory.
- And blessed are those who believe that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled...by your living faith in Christ.
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- An interesting reading from the prophet Micah today—one of the most explicit of all prophecies of the Bible: “*You, Bethlehem-Ephrathah...from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel; whose origin is from of old, from ancient times.*”
- ...sort of like that first line in the Gospel of John written hundreds of years later: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*” (John 1:1 RSV)
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- In our day it is trendy to not believe...to put all “faith” only in what can be seen, heard, measured or mathematically calculated... which, then, necessarily implies that Man Himself is the upper limit of all that is; it is HE that is god And isn’t that a flattering thought for our egos?
- ...and one ant said to the other: “WE must be the highest of beings! See the expanse and technical prowess of our tunnels. See

our wisdom in the gathering of food and our cooperative work. How can anything be higher than ourselves?!”...limited, of course, by their own perception of what is...by the empirical data of their sensual existence.

- One of the most famous illustrations of philosophy is “the cave” by Plato.
- Those limited to earthly things and knowledge, he said, are like persons chained deep in the damp darkness of a cave...able to view only the one wall of the cave.
- They could only try to interpret reality by the shadows of the figures on the wall.
- But this was all they knew; this is what was real to them...and they were content with it, and even enjoyed trying to interpret the shadows...congratulating one another on their interpretations.
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- However, one day one who was not content in believing that the shadows were all there was.
- So he broke his chains and turned around and saw the figures and the fire, and realized the limitation of the shadows.
- Knowing there must be more, he searched and he saw faint rays of light coming from one end of the cave leading upward.
- He followed the light, pausing now and again to adjust his eyes to the increasing brightness.
- Finally he stepped out of the cave and saw the world...the sun in its magnificent brightness and the world in its unlimited beauty... and he knew the light was true light, and the beauty he beheld was true beauty.
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- He returns and tries desperately to convince others that they are deluded...that the true light is up at the entrance of the cave.
- But they turn away...content to languish among the shadows and damp of the familiar...because of their apathy, and even fear of

what they do not understand, would never know the joys of the light.

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- This, I think, is the malady of many who refuse to believe...and who refuse to even investigate the claims of faith: because to come to the realization of the truth of God is to leave the comfortable...and, scarier yet, to then be bound by His Word.
- And the realization of the truth of God is also to realize that Man is not the pinnacle of existence, but rather wholly dependent upon God. And our intellectual pride doesn't like that.
- But Man is inexorably driven to seek Truth...and Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He is both the road and the destination.
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- We, as His disciples, have the duty to try to lead those in the cave to come up to the light.
- The reality of God...the reality of Christ...is there for all to see, and clear for those who dare venture from the cave of their own limitations.
- No one can realistically deny the historicity of Jesus, and especially not His influence in the world...a man who, in an earthly sense, was a literal *nobody*—a mere workman—but whose teaching and works changed the face of the earth. Does that make sense without a supernatural power behind it?
- Our prophecy from Micah today is one of the many fulfilled prophecies of Scripture—prophecies fulfilled hundreds of years later.
- Other data affirming God's truth and power are miracles...such as the one just declared by the intercession of Mother Teresa for her now soon-to-be canonization:
- From the NBC version on the IHM Facebook page: “The... miracle involved the curing of a man in Santos, Brazil, with a serious viral brain infection. The patient's wife continuously sought the intercession of the Blessed Mother Teresa. The man

was in a coma and about to undergo an emergency operation when a neurosurgeon returned to the operating room and found the patient inexplicably awake and without pain. The patient made an immediate and full recovery. Despite tests showing that prolonged drug treatment had made him sterile, he went on to have two children.” One of hundreds of miracles which have occurred before saints are canonized...and which are disregarded by the tenants of the cave, who prefer shadows.

- When...IF...we dare leave the cave, we do not grope in the darkness; we have a guide: the Holy Spirit which holds the hand of the Church and guides her towards the light...the Scriptures which are the Word of God...and the sacraments, which light the path before us.
- The Church...and the Word of God...tell us that Christ has come for our salvation—the salvation of those who believe in Him and follow His Word.
- And thus...truly blessed are those who have the courage to venture forth into the light...and thus truly *“blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.”*

Reading 1

[Mi 5:1-4a](#)

Thus says the LORD:

You, Bethlehem-Ephrathah
too small to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel;
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient times.

Therefore the Lord will give them up, until the time
when she who is to give birth has borne,
and the rest of his kindred shall return
to the children of Israel.

He shall stand firm and shepherd his flock
by the strength of the LORD,
in the majestic name of the LORD, his God;
and they shall remain, for now his greatness
shall reach to the ends of the earth; he shall be peace.

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19](#)

(4) Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

O shepherd of Israel, hearken,
from your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth.
Rouse your power,
and come to save us.

Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

Once again, O LORD of hosts,
look down from heaven, and see;
take care of this vine,
and protect what your right hand has planted
the son of man whom you yourself made strong.

Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

May your help be with the man of your right hand,
with the son of man whom you yourself made strong.
Then we will no more withdraw from you;
give us new life, and we will call upon your name.

Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

Reading II

[Heb 10:5-10](#)

Brothers and sisters:

When Christ came into the world, he said:

“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
but a body you prepared for me;
in holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight.
Then I said, ‘As is written of me in the scroll,
behold, I come to do your will, O God.’”

First he says, “Sacrifices and offerings,
holocausts and sin offerings,
you neither desired nor delighted in.”

These are offered according to the law.

Then he says, “Behold, I come to do your will.”

He takes away the first to establish the second.

By this “will,” we have been consecrated

through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Gospel

[Lk 1:39-45](#)

Mary set out
and traveled to the hill country in haste
to a town of Judah,
where she entered the house of Zechariah
and greeted Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting,
the infant leaped in her womb,
and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit,
cried out in a loud voice and said,

“Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

And how does this happen to me,

that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears,
the infant in my womb leaped for joy.

Blessed are you who believed

that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.”