

Although The Revised Common Lectionary recommends **Matthew 1: 18-25** as the Gospel appointed for this fourth Sunday of Advent, we would suggest the following story of Elizabeth and Mary in their respective pregnancies. This piece was written by The Rev. Susan Bock, rector of St. Gabriel's Church in Grosse Pointe, Michigan.

A Dramatic Reading for Advent

The presenters are not aware of each other and speak to the congregation. It is most effective for the presenters to come in "on top of each other's lines" so that the lines tumble and are sometimes concurrent. Their movements may be choreographed so that they move across the entire presentation area and finish either back to back or facing each other. Our presenters ended by reaching toward each other and just barely touching each other's hand.

It is important for Mary to be very anguished in contrast to Elizabeth's elation.

Elizabeth (Happily) They say you should be careful what you pray for!

Mary (With obvious anguish) They say you should be careful what you pray for.

Elizabeth For years we have prayed for a child, Zechariah and me.

Mary For years, I have prayed for the deliverance of Israel. But I didn't mean like this!

Elizabeth I can't be having a baby!

Mary I'm hardly more than a baby myself, but this much I know: a girl can't get pregnant without the help of a man.

Elizabeth But here I am (touching the roundness of her belly) as certainly pregnant as anyone could be!

Mary But here I am, pregnant! What will people think?

Elizabeth I know what they'll think. "Elizabeth?! We thought she was too old!"

Mary And the terrible things they'll call me...

Elizabeth Long have they called me barren! But God has remembered me and lifted my shame. *The angel said - was there really an angel?

Mary *The angel said - was there really an angel?

(These two lines - Elizabeth's and Mary's identical lines - could be synchronized)

Elizabeth Gabriel was his name, and he said this child will be filled with God's Spirit, even in my womb. He certainly is lively in there, and he's filled me with such life. And hope. Hope for us all. (Pause) His name will be John.

Mary His name will be Jesus.

Elizabeth He will be great, and will prepare the way for the Messiah!

Mary He will be great, and save our people from their sins. But who will save me from the wrath of the rabbis?!

Elizabeth *(In an uplifted, heaven-looking posture)* I've always said, Lord, there's nothing you can't do!

Mary *(In a more prayerful, thoughtful posture)* I've always said there's nothing you can't do. So, please, Lord, help me now.

Elizabeth I have to talk to someone!

Mary What am I going to do? Who can I tell?

Elizabeth He never was much of a talker, my Zechariah. But now he's speechless. Claims he can't talk. The angel made him mute. Likely story!

Mary I must go and see my cousin. Only, please, Elizabeth, don't condemn me!

Elizabeth Mary! I could talk to her. She's young and hasn't waited so long! She probably believes in angels! Only, please, Mary, don't laugh. But I want to laugh!

Mary *(Just a bit more hopeful)* Yes, I can talk to her.

Elizabeth And shout, and sing. I'd dance if I could!

These lines need to topple over each other.

Mary Please, Elizabeth...

Elizabeth Please, Mary...

Mary I'm so afraid...

Elizabeth Don't laugh

Mary Don't condemn me.

Elizabeth And come soon!

Mary Please.

Elizabeth Please.

The Magnificat may be read or sung here. There is a lovely version in Songs & Prayers from Taize, GIA Publications Inc., Chicago