

### **Thoughts on the Daily Word**

*3<sup>rd</sup> Week of Advent. Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> December. Readings: Zephaniah 3:14-18; Psalm: 32; Gospel: Luke 1:39-45.*

I once read that a third to a half of all women who gave birth in the ancient world died giving birth or shortly afterwards. Mary was really a very young girl but travelling many miles to look after a very elderly cousin was way beyond the call of duty. What it must have felt like for Elizabeth in her old age, beyond the childbearing time, must also have been daunting in the least. Her likelihood of surviving childbirth must have appeared very small. We men take these things for granted but this is the background to their meeting. What happens afterwards, when they meet, is life-giving. First to Elizabeth and John and then to Mary. The child moved, revealing life, and Elizabeth was filled with life, the Holy Spirit. Mary in her turn must have been amazed at this confirmation of the angel's message. How her heart must have been lifted by the Holy Spirit to proclaim what God had done for her in the Magnificat. This episode must have lifted the very natural fear from both of their hearts just as the words from Zephaniah say, 'Zion, have no fear'. This is the call to each of us whatever our fears today.