

Fourth Sunday of Advent B2023

Tonight we will be celebrating the feast of Christmas. All we have spiritually done these past weeks aimed at preparing us to this great event of our faith. The feast of Christmas is the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation for our world and our lives. God's plan of salvation consists in his deep desire of building up a community of life with us through his son Jesus who becomes one of us.

God's plan of salvation was known only to him from all eternity and hidden to everybody else. The revelation of this plan explains the role God assigned to the prophets and the reason why he sent them to his people, Israel. To David who wanted to build a house to God, the prophet Nathan said, "You will not be the one who builds a house to God, but God himself will instead build for you a stable, solid and eternal house."

The prophet was not talking here about a material building made of bricks, but about family and posterity. God, through the word of his prophet, was promising David that a son of his would succeed him, his dynasty would reign forever and the throne of Israel would always belong to his family. The fulfillment of that prophecy went far beyond what David could ever imagine and even what Nathan intended.

While Nathan and David were thinking of an earthly Kingdom, God would give David a descendant who was really to reign forever, Jesus Christ, the son of Mary. We see here how God's plans are beyond human expectations. We too in time of hardship and difficulties, we very often ask God for support and help so that all our wishes and plans may be fulfilled.

Though he answers our prayers, sometimes his reply goes well beyond our expectations. He does not always consider our plans and dreams as best for us. He substitutes his own plan for ours and asks us to trust him. So, Israel was expecting a strong and powerful king; God sent them a poor and defenseless child. Such are God's surprises! Blessed are those who, like Mary, welcome and accept them.

Today's Gospel is all about how God's plan of salvation came to be realized in the person of Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah and in the life of Mary as the one who said yes to God. By choosing Mary to be the mother of his son, God associates human beings to his plan of salvation. As he chose in the past many prophets and famous persons to accomplish various missions on his behalf for the sake of his people, so God chooses a woman to bear his son into the world.

On this Sunday we celebrate the humility of God who spouses our humanity, but also the humility of Mary who says yes on our behalf to him. While we are meditating on the mission given to Mary and her free answer, we ask ourselves about our own particular mission the Lord has given us for those under our care. How do we perform it, each one of us according to his vocation as father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, brother, sister?

By resolving to send his Son into the world, God involves himself in the history of mankind; he establishes a New Covenant between Himself and human beings. The “yes” of Mary opens the door to the incarnation of Jesus in the world. In her humility and her self-effacement, Mary allows God to become one of us. By her obedience the kingdom of God becomes a reality in the world and humanity is admitted into God’s heavenly presence for eternity. Without this reminder there would be thousand ways of celebrating Christmas, but Mary shows us the right one: it is only by freely welcoming the one who comes in our hearts that we seal the New Covenant with God.

How did Mary fulfill the mission receive from God? The gospel says that at the hearing of angel’s greeting, Mary was perplexed and wondering how she would perform such a mission. But, the angel Gabriel reassured her: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you”. At that time, Mary recognized the fragility of human beings and the grandeur of God who makes the impossible possible.

Like Mary, we too feel at times poor and unworthy to stand in the presence of God. When we look at our lives, we find so many sins, so many wrong attitudes and bad habits that we are afraid to face God. Let us not be discouraged and give up hope for our salvation. What God wants is not that we dwell in those things, but we change. Let us never forget that God usually prefers to begin his work where there is poverty, misery and dirt. It is when people acknowledge their brokenness and want to change that the work of salvation starts.

Let me finish by recalling the answer of Mary: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word”. Here, we have a great lesson of generosity, availability and selfless obedience to God’s plan. God calls us, like Mary, to a particular mission in life. When we do our best to respond to his call we give evidence to his presence in the world. God calls us to be generous in the mission he has given to each one of us. God calls us to do more than build a house for his presence, as David was requiring. But, like Mary, he calls us to be the house of his presence. He calls us to radiate his reality to a world that looks and longs for a savior. Let us repeat this little prayer in the silence of our heart: “O come, O come, Emmanuel. Come and give us the strength and the courage to radiate your presence to a waiting world”.

2 Samuel: 1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Romans 16: 25-27; John 1: 26-38



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