

Lectionary Faith-Sharing Community
4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Cycle B - December 20, 2020

OPENING PRAYER



Leader: *My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.*

All: For he has looked upon his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed.

Leader: *The Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name.*

All: He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation.

Leader: *Let us invoke the presence of God:*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit have instructed the hearts of the faithful grant that by the same Spirit we may truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations.

Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

FIRST READING [2 Samuel 7 (1-5), (8-12), (14), (16)]

When King David was settled in his palace, and the Lord had given him rest from his enemies on every side, he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God dwells in a tent!" Nathan answered the king, "Go, do whatever you have in mind, for the Lord is with you."

But that night the Lord spoke to Nathan and said: "Go, tell my servant David, 'Thus says the Lord: Should you build me a house to dwell in?' " "It was I who took you from the pasture and from the care of the flock to be commander of my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you went, and I have destroyed all your enemies before you. And I will make you famous like the great ones of the earth. I will fix a place for my people Israel; I will plant them so that they may dwell in their place without further disturbance. Neither shall the wicked continue to afflict them as they did of old, since the time I first appointed judges over my people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies.

The Lord also reveals to you that he will establish a house for you. And when your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins, and I will make his kingdom firm. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever.'"

The books of Samuel narrate the origin of the kingdom of Israel. In the formation of the kingdom Samuel, Saul, David have played a leading role. The key moment in the Davidic tradition is Nathan's prophecy announcing the perennality of the royal house of David. From this promise the events of the house of David are interpreted as part of God's plan. The king's plans coincide with those of God and have his approval through the person of the prophet.

There is a dramatic change in the text. It is not David who is going to make Yahweh great but on the contrary. Yahweh will give descendants to the house of David. We know that this is fulfilled later in Jesus Christ. He is "the son of David" and a descendant of the house of David; only in Messiah has the house of David received the eternal presence.

David did not understand it. Neither do we just understand. God is free, God does not seek our gifts or want our rewards. And God does not want to rival man. He does not love us because we thank him or give us a gift

so that we can repay him. He doesn't love us because he needs us, but he needs us because he loves us. Nor does he love us because we are good, but we are good because he loves us. We can only repay God with love. God does not want the greatest house or the most glorious worship, or the most abundant riches and treasures. The glory of God is not that man squeezes himself, but that he lives. When God wants to choose a house, He does not look for splendid temples, but poor cradles and humble hearts.

Therefore, David's idea of building a magnificent temple was not accepted. Nor did Solomon understand it. Neither do we finish understanding it. He is the God of the exodus, not of the monarchy. He is the God of life, not of worship. He is the God of freedom, not the God of the institution. He is the God of love, not the God of power. It is God, it is not an idol.

- (1) What words or expressions have caught your attention?
- (2) When you think about building a chapel, or a church, is it because God needs it? or why do we need it?
- (3) Read the third paragraph of these comments again. Reflect and share ideas.
- (4) What is the difference between an idol and God?

SECOND READING [Romans 16 (25-27)]

Brothers and sisters:

To him who can strengthen you, according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret for long ages but now manifested through the prophetic writings and, according to the command of the eternal God, made known to all nations to bring about the obedience of faith, to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ be glory forever and ever. Amen.

More than an apostolic message of advice, as we are accustomed to read in the second readings, this short text is a praise that at the same time contains a declaration that recognizes the greatness of God. Paul suggests that the vastness of the revelation of the mystery of God had come to us incomplete through the patriarchs, the prophets and those chosen by God through the texts we find in the Old Testament.

Now that God became man, he has spoken through a human mouth, in the person of Jesus Christ, and his revelation is direct, not through intermediaries. God himself has spoken. And from that important moment, the history of humanity changes, since, according to what we read in the prologue of the Gospel of John, "... the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ..."

With this liturgical formula (it is what is customary to call a "doxology"), Paul closes his letter to the Romans, praising God for his "plan". The plan is for all peoples to know Jesus Christ, beyond all borders. And this plan is the Good News, the great news that must reach the whole world, that is, the Gospel. And the Good News that we must communicate is that the Kingdom of God is among us, within the reach of those who want to benefit from it.

- (1) What is the Kingdom of God? What do we hope to receive when we recite in the Lord's Prayer "Thy Kingdom come"?
- (2) How does the fact that the Kingdom of God is within our reach benefit us?

GOSPEL [Luke 1 (26-38)]

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary.

And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you."

But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus.



He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?"

And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God."

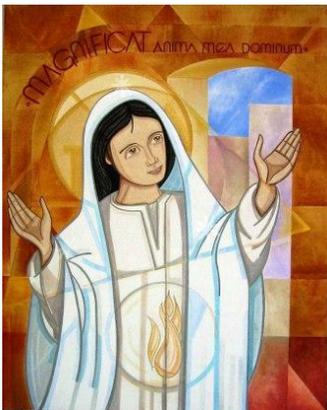
Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."

Then the angel departed from her.

The appearance of Gabriel is very important in the scene of the Annunciation. In the book of Daniel (8:16 and 9:21) Gabriel is mentioned and in verse 9:24 a prophetic message is made about a time of 70 weeks that would have to elapse before the establishment of the definitive kingdom.

In the Gospel of Luke, the angel Gabriel appears first in Lk 1 (19) in the temple; then, after six months (180 days), to Mary, Lk 1 (26); nine months later (270 days) Christ was born, and 40 days later he entered the temple. Well, these figures make a total of 490 days, that is, seventy weeks! That perhaps explains why Luke in some passages uses the expression "When the days were fulfilled ..." Lk 1 (23); 2 (6); 2 (22).

Finally the last stone of the house promised by God to David is laid. And the first stone of the true temple of God is laid among men. The sky is getting closer to the earth. And the land chosen to build this sanctuary is Mary, an unknown young woman from Nazareth, an insignificant people. Now the promises made to David are fulfilled: "The Lord God will give him the throne of David, his father ... and his kingdom will have no end."



Let's talk about Maria now. She has not been chosen for being the most beautiful or the daughter of an important person, nor is she the president of any charitable or pious association. In Mary, the handmaid of the Lord, we have a true believer. Feeling favored by the Most High, she does not respond to let her think more slowly in order to better calculate the risks.

Mary reproduces the gesture of Abraham, father of believers, when she leaves her homeland to go into the unknown. The person of faith trusts God as the baby trusts its mother. She does not seek to secure a savings account or her retirement plan to begin working for the Kingdom of God. Mary-mother is at the same time Mary-child, who does not object. It is the delivery without seeking reward, the servant at any risk. Mary is humility without knowing it or rehearsing it, which is the most perfect way of being it, she joyfully and naturally assumes being the slave, the servant of God.

A faithful and loyal servant of God is necessarily poor in spirit. He is the one who, considering nothing of his own, is grateful for his gifts and qualities and gives himself to share what he has. A poor man of God, according to the Gospel, is one who does not take pride in his good works or present a record of his merits at every moment. No one condemns because no one will dare to judge arrogantly; he does not expect an award from men, not even an award from God, but having fulfilled as good, at the end of the day he says to himself, "we are useless servants, we did nothing but what we should have done." Luke 17 (10)

- (1) What stands out to you in this reading?
- (2) Remembering what was reflected in the first reading, what was the first temple in which the Lord really dwelt?
- (3) Read Daniel 9 (24) How can this verse be interpreted?
- (4) Also read Daniel 9 (26) How can this verse be interpreted?
- (5) Review the virtues of Mary, and propose ways to imitate them.

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord of the day and night, of the beginning and of the end: At the closing of this meeting, once again we lift up our hearts to You, divine source of all life.*

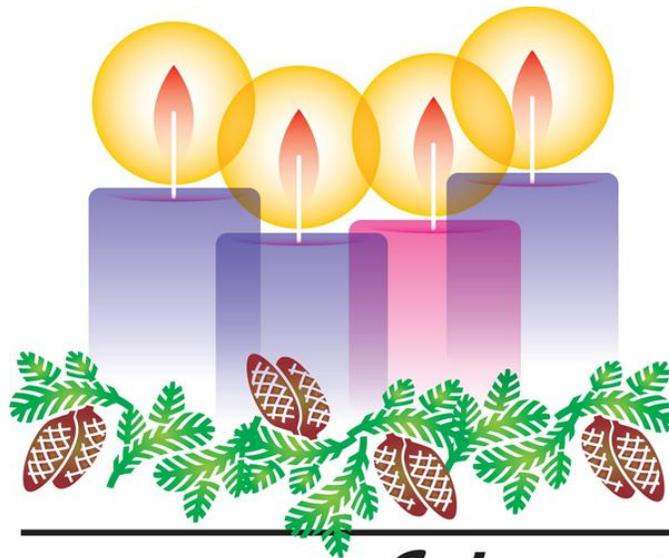
All: **We thank you for the gifts you have bestowed on us. We thank you for the love expressed in companionship and understanding, mutual respect and shared ideas. We give you thanks for your holy power that will help us in our concerns that we have shared. For these and all the gifts that come from You, we give you thanks.**

Leader: *Lord hear our prayers* (attendees can propose their own needs of prayer)

All: **In the same way in which we have being blessed by your presence as we meet, we ask now to bless our safe return to our homes. May your holy blessing be over us + in the name of the Father**

Leader: *May the King of the eternal glory gather us together in His heavenly banquet. Amen.*

Deacon José Moronta DeaconJMoronta @ stmarktampa.org



FOURTH SUNDAY OF *Advent*
