

**Msgr. Dennis Sheehan**  
**Homily Given on December 21, 2008**  
**Fourth Sunday of Advent**  
**Liturgical Year B**

God has a plan for us. That's today's Scripture message on the last Sunday of Advent. Chances are, we've done lots of planning for Christmas. We've planned our decorations. We've planned our meals. We've planned our travel. But today is not about our plans. Today is about God's plan.

We have two stories today of two planners. They're very different people, but their stories carry very similar messages.

Let's start with King David in the first reading. You remember David. We recall that he was a king, full of big ideas, ambitious, and very capable. At the point we meet him today, he's at the pinnacle of his success. He's made peace with his enemies; he's built himself a palace in Jerusalem. "Now," David thinks to himself, "now, it is time to do something good for God." He'll build a temple. He'll impress God and everyone. He starts planning.

What does God say to David's plan? No. Simply no. God has other plans for David. He's going to make David into a great royal dynasty, a line that will bring God to the whole of creation. It's to David's credit in all this that he was willing to listen. He was willing to surrender. He could move out of himself and walk into God's plan.

Now move to Mary. She's on the scene in Nazareth about 1000 years after David. We meet her as a respectable young woman who has a good future. She'll marry Joseph - a middleclass craftsman - her future will include children, security, a little comfort. God then moves in on Mary. Through the angel Gabriel, God says "no" to Mary's planning. Her life will be risky, even a little scandalous and certainly full of sorrow. Like David, Mary listens. Like David, she gives up her own plans and walks into God's future.

We have plans - for Christmas, for next year, for our lives. As Advent ends, God's Word reminds us that God has plans for us. Remember that the next time your plans go wrong. Maybe, just maybe, it was God moving with a different plan.

That's not to say we shouldn't plan. Planning is good. It's responsible. But Advent's final reminder is that God's business is very often not "business as usual". One of life's most challenging tasks can be surrendering to what God has in store.

What will the future be like if God upsets our plans? I don't know. David didn't know. Mary didn't know. We can't plan for it until God shows us. We can only be open. Our word can be Mary's. "I am the Lord's servant. Be it done to me as you have planned."