

Fr. Curtis Miller    December 19-20, 2020    Homily for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent

In ancient times, the Ark of the Covenant was the place of God's presence among His chosen people, the Israelites. It's easy for us to take for granted, but it's incredible that Almighty God, the eternal creator of the universe wants to be with us, little ordinary human beings, to live in our midst. He wants to share His love with us.

When we love someone, we want to be with them. That's why one of the hardest parts of this pandemic has been being apart from our loved ones.

King David's son, Solomon, would build a great temple in Jerusalem to house the Ark. It would be an impressive place, where God would dwell among His people, and where they could go to pray to Him, to offer sacrifices of thanksgiving and repentance.

In our Gospel reading today, we hear about a new ark, not a golden box housed in a temple, but a person: the Virgin Mary of Nazareth. God chose to send His Son, Jesus, to be conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The unborn Jesus was a precious treasure she carried within, yet unseen and unheralded by the world.

Mary always carries Jesus to other people, as she first did in her visitation to her cousin, Elizabeth. Though no one else noticed the presence of God dwelling within her, Elizabeth and her unborn son, John the Baptist, did recognize Jesus' presence, and they were filled with joy.

Though He often comes to us unseen, too, do you and I recognize the presence of Jesus? Do we take the time to build a fitting dwelling for Him, not a temple of stone, but a place in our hearts? Do we have time set aside in the midst of our busy days for prayer and attending Mass?

In these final days of Advent, let's resolve to prepare a place for Jesus in our lives. The hour of His birth is fast approaching. At Christmas, may we not say to Mary as she carries Jesus to be born in our lives that we have no room, like those innkeepers of Bethlehem said long ago. Rather, may we joyfully welcome the gift of Jesus, coming to dwell in our hearts.