

### **First Reading**

*2 Samuel 7:1-5,8b-12,14a,16*

The Lord promises David that he will raise from his descendents a kingdom that will endure forever.

### **Responsorial Psalm**

*Psalm 89:2-5,27,29*

A prayer of praise to the Lord for his faithfulness to his covenant.

### **Second Reading**

*Romans 16:25-27*

Paul praises God for making his revelation known.

### **Gospel Reading**

*Luke 1:26-38*

The angel Gabriel visits Mary to announce the birth of Jesus.

### **Background on the Gospel Reading**

This Sunday we read the story of the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary about the birth of Jesus. This story is found only in Luke's Gospel. On this fourth Sunday of Advent, the liturgy shifts our attention from John the Baptist to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Both John and Mary serve as important figures for our reflection during the season of Advent; they both played instrumental roles in preparing the way for Jesus. Last week we reflected on John the Baptist's announcement that the Savior was among us, although not yet recognized. This week we reflect upon Mary's example of faith and obedience to God, traits which permitted her to receive the angel's message that God's Son would be born as a human person, as one of us.

We are familiar with the story of the Annunciation, and it is fitting that we recall how God announced the birth of Jesus as we make our final preparations for our celebration of the Incarnation. The angel Gabriel visited Mary, a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph. Mary greeted the angel's news with awe and wonder and asked how it could be possible that she could give birth to a child. In his reply, the angel Gabriel announced the seemingly impossible reality: the child to be born would be conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and would be God's own Son. The angel reported to Mary another miracle; her relative Elizabeth was also pregnant despite having been thought to be unable to have a child. Mary's response to the angel, which is called her *fiat*, is an example of complete faith and obedience to God.

The story of the Annunciation calls to our attention God's wondrous action in human history. God chose a human person to give birth to his Son so that all humanity would know God's salvation. Mary, already full of God's grace, was able to cooperate in this great plan for our salvation. Thus Jesus was born as one of us, fully human and also fully divine. This is the

mystery we prepare to celebrate at Christmas, the mystery of the Incarnation. In the model of Mary, we pray that we will be people of faith who recognize God's saving plan for us and are able respond with obedience.

### **Family Connection**

One of the challenges of faith is to recognize God's plan for us and to remain open to God's will and God's actions in our world. Filled with God's grace, Mary models for us the kind of faith that is needed to cooperate in God's plan of salvation. Like Mary, we are given the awesome opportunity to cooperate in God's saving plan. On this final Sunday of Advent, our Gospel invites us to consider how our preparations for Christmas have made us more aware of God's grace working in our lives.

Gather together your family and talk about what you have been doing as a family to prepare for Christmas. How have these preparations helped you to better celebrate the central mystery of Christmas, the Incarnation? Our Gospel today talks about how Mary was prepared for her role in Christ's birth. Read today's Gospel, Luke 1:26-38. Consider the question: What enabled Mary to say yes to God? Which of your Advent activities have made you more aware of God's grace in your life? Conclude in prayer together that God's grace will enable your family to be more faithful and obedient to God. Pray together again this week, the Magnificat.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior;  
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.  
From this day all generations will call me blessed:  
the Almighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his Name.  
He has mercy on those who fear him  
in every generation.  
He has shown the strength of his arm,  
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.  
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,  
and has lifted up the lowly.  
He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.  
He has come to the help of his servant Israel  
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,  
the promise he made to our fathers,

to Abraham and his children forever. Amen