

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 21, 2008

2 Sam 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Ps 89: 2-5, 27, 29; Ro 16: 25-27; Lk 1: 26-28

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This fourth Sunday in Advent is truly Mary's Sunday! Her simple but profound response to the Angel's message, "I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done according to your word," was the occasion for God's greatest gift to the human race because at that moment Jesus, Son of God, became present in her womb and, consequently, also became one of us.

What is Mary's message to us today? In the challenges each one of us must face—though none of them so awe-inspiring and momentous as Gabriel's message to Mary—can we learn to say "Let it be done...? Can we trust that God will support us as He did Mary when we accept the joys and sorrows that come our way each day? And let us not passively accept each new experience, but actively take hold and use it for our personal growth and/or outreach to others.

Sometimes God will be asking us to set aside a cherished plan as He did in today's first reading when David revealed his dream of building a fine temple to honor Yahweh who had been dwelling for many years in a tent following his people's exodus from Egypt. "Not for you but for your son will be the task of erecting a beautiful house for God" the prophet tells him. It is interesting that the liturgists have chosen this particular reading about a "house for God" to accompany the Gospel of Luke which narrates the familiar story of our Redeemer's arrival in Mary's womb, truly now the "House of Gold and Ark of the Covenant."

The responsorial refrain selected for today—"Forever I will sing the goodness of the Lord"—is so very appropriate for today's liturgy as it echoes the psalmist David's joy as he celebrates the coming of the Savior, a true descendant from his very own house. How often do we sing the goodness of the Lord as we witness so many blessings in our lives?

Like Mary let us trust that we can welcome the "angels and their messages" that come to us these days before Christmas: patience with family members, cheerfulness when our plans are upset, kindness toward an annoying neighbor, generosity with precious time or gift for someone in need, volunteering help with a parish or community project or visiting some lonely person with a smile. In many small ways we can make Christ's presence in our world evident again with our "Let it be done." And probably no one will be aware of the personal cost we will experience with this imitation of Mary – but oh! God will know.