

## **4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent December 24, 2017 Cycle B**

Well here we are beginning the 4<sup>th</sup> week of Advent.

Because of what we might call, a trick of liturgical time, this 4<sup>th</sup> week of Advent is just “23 hours” long, beginning tonight with the 5PM Mass and ending tomorrow at 4PM when we celebrate our first Christmas Eve Mass.

It might be a reminder to us that God doesn't wear a watch or carry a Day-Timer. I hope your Christmas preparations are complete. I hope your house and you are ready.

Just as this last Sunday of Advent leads quickly into Christmas, our readings today serve as a good preparation for the stories we hear and see depicted for Christmas.

In our first reading, King David, in his palace, feels remiss that he has not provided a suitable home for God, only a tattered and worn tent, covering the Ark of the Covenant.

While his intentions were good, God had some lessons for David, about who would establish a house for whom.

David dreamed of building a temple for God. However, God's plan was to come into the world as one of us, and to build a community of believers, a Kingdom that would endure forever. You and I are part of that - Kingdom of God.

St Paul in his Letter to the Romans gives glory to God through Jesus Christ, who brought to fulfillment God's plan of salvation, now offered to all the nations and all peoples.

A stable, not a temple, was Christ's first house on Earth. God didn't come to the family of a king or priest, but invited a simple girl to be the mother of Jesus.

In the Philadelphia Museum of Art, there is an unusual painting by Henry Tanner of the classic Annunciation scene. In it, Mary is not depicted as a perfectly serene girl, kneeling in prayer, with a glowing halo above her head, as we often find.

Rather, Mary is shown sitting on her disheveled bed with unkempt hair, eyes frozen as if in awe or even terror. The look on her face is that of someone both stunned and confused.

And why wouldn't she be? There, in the middle of nowhere, the angel addresses the young woman asking her to agree to God's plan to change everything.

Gabriel brought to Mary a mind-boggling promise. "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus."

It is a message that embodies the very spirit of anticipation! It also is God's interruption in the simple life of this simple woman.

Mary's life is pretty much laid out before her by her family and culture - simple, hidden and uncomplicated. But God interrupts her pre-ordered life. He asks her to surrender the life expected of her, for something much bigger.

If we are not careful, life has a way of becoming routine. We are all creatures of habit and can become very comfortable living in our little world. But when that happens we can lose that sense of anticipation. We no longer live in Advent hope.

Some of those, let's call them, "Mary Moments" may pass us by if we don't allow God to interrupt our routine.

Even if we don't have eyes to see him, or ears to hear him, or minds to believe in him, the Angel Gabriel still comes to announce or to whisper that God is at work in our troubled world and our sometimes-troubled lives. He has a purpose for your life and mine.

Mary chose trust over fear, belief over doubt, freedom over being held hostage. We are now challenged by Mary's example to do the same in each of our lives: to trust, to believe, to hope, to love.

So then get out of your routine; your comfort zone; let God interrupt.

--Look beyond yourself to someone in your life who may be living on the edge, and needs your help.

--maybe let go of a bad habit, that is keeping you hostage, maybe indifference is one of them.

--Is there a relationship that needs healing, a priority that needs to be put in place.

The “me” life, the shallow life, the surface life, which we all fall into sometimes, can kill our soul.

All the while, in the background, there is an angel trying to get our attention.

God’s messenger comes to us in the needs of our children, the struggles of family and friends, the cries of the poor, the despair of the lost and marginalized.

As we come to the end of our Advent season of anticipation, we now must shift to action.

The angel explains to Mary: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you....”

Bishop Robert Barron says that at the heart of the spiritual life is the conviction that your life is not about you. The real spiritual life is about allowing oneself to be overwhelmed by the one who loves us.

As we complete our journey to His crib, let us trust in the same grace that enlightened Mary, as we pray: “Let it be done to me according to your word.” Let the adventure of my life begin anew!