

## Deacon Dan's Homily for Sunday, December 20, 2020. The Fourth Sunday of Advent

This morning we hear the "YES" that opened the way for the Messiah, Jesus, to take on human life and fulfill God's plan for salvation through Him. In this yes, Mary answers the question of God, "Will you bear my Son within you and become the holy and immaculate temple of the Son of God." Mary's fiat, her willing yes to fulfill God's word for her part to play in this moment where the Divinity of heaven is joined with the humanity of humankind in the womb of a simple, humble, young Jewish girl.



The Venerable Bishop Fulton Sheen wrote, "As the fall of man was a free act, so too the Redemption had to be free. What is called the Annunciation was actually God asking the free consent of a creature to help Him to be incorporated into humanity" (Life of Christ).

We can turn away from God freely and we turn to Him freely, as well. Just as Mary's yes set her on a mission to be the Mother of God, to be Jesus' gift to us, as our Mother; He asks us to accept His invitation to mission in our own lives, as well.

A thousand years before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Nathan told King David, God's promise, "I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins, and I will make his kingdom firm. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever."

Here's a little side note, David, King David, was anointed by Samuel in Bethlehem. Jesus, the Christ, meaning the Anointed One, in the line of David was, as we know, born in Bethlehem. Bethlehem means House of Bread. The Bread of Life is, as Jesus promised, our spiritual food. These are hardly coincidences, merely historical side notes. Rather, all of this is evidence of God's big plan for His people.

The angel Gabriel's greeting of Mary tells of her readiness, her closeness to God, to accept such an overwhelming and awesome role. He says, "'Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.'" Full of grace; a title, not merely an adjective, meaning no room for sin. Filled with the graces of God. To be filled with the Spirit of God leaves no room for anything that attempts to darken that state of grace. No room for sin.

Mary, as our Mother; Mary as our example of the perfect human person gives us an example of how we are to strive to also be filled with the Spirit of God. Like us, Mary was

surrounded by the things of the world, the temptations and sin of the world. But, she remained holy.

In our imperfect world, within our ordinary, daily lives, God is continually, relentlessly asking us for our yes to Him. And, each day we have the opportunity to choose, to exercise our free will, to say yes to Him, to live our lives for others.

Every day, we come to decision points to choose to be joyful or crabby, to be generous or selfish, to listen or shut someone out, to support or to tear down, to love another or love our own ego. Most days are filled with ordinary opportunities to answer God. But, there are some times in our lives when a BIG YES comes along.

I've had three big yeses in my life. Saying yes to love and be loved by Terri. Here we are nearly 47 years later, still in love...a deeper love than ever before. Saying yes to a liver transplant. And, saying yes to become a Deacon. All three are, of course connected.

Our marital love created the foundation to all that follows because God has always been the third person in our marriage. We probably didn't always acknowledge His presence the way we should have, but He was always accompanying and guiding us.

Saying yes to be a liver donor came in 2004, through a newspaper story by Jennifer Garza in the Sacramento Bee. Jennifer interviewed Bishop Weigand and wrote a story about his liver disease, and within the story described what it took to be a liver donor. I read the story, and thought a little about our Bishop's plight., and put the newspaper in the recycle bin. Then every night for a week I retrieved the paper and reread the story. On the 7<sup>th</sup> night, following Mass here at Holy Trinity, I wrote the Bishop and offered to be a donor. We had surgery 14 months later on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005.

That simple yes has led to numerous opportunities to speak about the experience; in medical terms, through the human experience and how God touched our lives, and continues to touch our lives through that yes to Him.

It was that yes to give 73% of my liver to Bishop Weigand that led me to come to know this holy man who loves God so much. And it was in coming to know him that I came to hear God's asking me to be a Deacon to serve you. I am so grateful that He asked me to say yes.

God will never be outdone in His mercy and love for us. He has been so merciful and generous in His love for me to be here with you, serving you, loving you and being loved by you.

I'm now going to ask you to close your eyes and listen carefully as we conclude.

*Mary said, "...May it be done to me according to your word.* To what is God asking you to say "yes"? What is stand-ing in the way of your generous response to God's will?

Upon hearing the greeting, Mary was troubled. We too may be troubled when we hear God's ask. But, just as Gabriel told Mary not to be afraid, God tells us, too, do not be afraid. I am here. Trust in me. Follow me.

If you are afraid, name it; what is it you are afraid of? Then, ask yourself, how are these fears affecting my relationship with God, and with others?

Then, and this is the most important step, tell God how you're feeling and ask Him for help. Tell God what's on your mind, troubling you; and ask Him for help.

#### Fourth Sunday of Advent

Lectionary: 11

Reading 1

#### **2 SM 7:1-5, 8B-12, 14A, 16**

When King David was settled in his palace,  
and the LORD had given him rest from his enemies on every side,  
he said to Nathan the prophet,

"Here I am living in a house of cedar,  
while the ark of God dwells in a tent!"

Nathan answered the king,

"Go, do whatever you have in mind,  
for the LORD is with you."

But that night the LORD spoke to Nathan and said:

"Go, tell my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD:  
Should you build me a house to dwell in?'"

"It was I who took you from the pasture  
and from the care of the flock  
to be commander of my people Israel.

I have been with you wherever you went,  
and I have destroyed all your enemies before you.

And I will make you famous like the great ones of the earth.

I will fix a place for my people Israel;

I will plant them so that they may dwell in their place  
without further disturbance.

Neither shall the wicked continue to afflict them as they did of old,  
since the time I first appointed judges over my people Israel.

I will give you rest from all your enemies.

The LORD also reveals to you

that he will establish a house for you.

And when your time comes and you rest with your ancestors,

I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins,  
and I will make his kingdom firm.  
I will be a father to him,  
and he shall be a son to me.  
Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me;  
your throne shall stand firm forever.”

Responsorial Psalm

**PS 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29**

**R. (2a) For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.**

The promises of the LORD I will sing forever;  
through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness.  
For you have said, “My kindness is established forever”;  
in heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness.

**R. For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.**

“I have made a covenant with my chosen one,  
I have sworn to David my servant:  
Forever will I confirm your posterity  
and establish your throne for all generations.”

**R. For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.**

“He shall say of me, ‘You are my father,  
my God, the Rock, my savior.’  
Forever I will maintain my kindness toward him,  
and my covenant with him stands firm.”

**R. For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.**

Reading 2

**ROM 16:25-27**

Brothers and sisters:

To him who can strengthen you,  
according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ,  
according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret for long ages  
but now manifested through the prophetic writings and,  
according to the command of the eternal God,  
made known to all nations to bring about the obedience of faith,  
to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ  
be glory forever and ever.

Amen.

Alleluia

**LK 1:38**

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.

May it be done to me according to your word.

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

Gospel

**LK 1:26-38**

The angel Gabriel was sent from God  
to a town of Galilee called Nazareth,  
to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph,  
of the house of David,  
and the virgin's name was Mary.

And coming to her, he said,

“Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.”

But she was greatly troubled at what was said  
and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

Then the angel said to her,

“Do not be afraid, Mary,

for you have found favor with God.

“Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,  
and you shall name him Jesus.

He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High,  
and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father,  
and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever,  
and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

But Mary said to the angel,

“How can this be,

since I have no relations with a man?”

And the angel said to her in reply,

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you,

and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

Therefore the child to be born

will be called holy, the Son of God.

And behold, Elizabeth, your relative,

has also conceived a son in her old age,

and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren;

for nothing will be impossible for God.”

Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.  
May it be done to me according to your word."  
Then the angel departed from her.