

Readings: no. 11, p. 27; BG, p. 16 1st Reading: 2 Samuel 7.1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16 2nd Reading: Romans 16.25-27
Gospel: Luke 1.26-38 4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT

We live in times dubbed the “information age,” bombarded with flash announcements of all sorts. How do we extract, messages meaningful, from the noise? Which announcements, ought we be attentive, and which dismissive? The whole world these days seems to be awaiting for some more encouraging news. Perhaps determining our responsiveness should first see from where a message derives, and to whom and where, it wishes to connect. Our brains, our hearts, or, some other, less holy side of our nature! Folks, pleasant announcements, are not a way much of the world will remember 2020. Nevertheless, God most often sends special and beautiful bulletins to us over the sacramental airwaves. These we cannot ignore because they land softly in our hearts.

Today’s first reading from 2nd Samuel recognizes perhaps the most significant announcement of the entire First Testament. God promised King David an eternal dynasty, triggering the hope we pivot towards in these final days of Advent. At rest, David is awakened and becomes aware of stately surroundings. God is humble, and it occurs to David, alongside the prophet Nathan, that there exists stark contrast between his living quarters, versus the Lord’s. The earthly king resolves to fix that situation by constructing another visible temple suitable for God but not better than his. David heads off to make his daily Shema prayer, saying. “Great are you Lord God! There is none like you and there is no God, but you, just as Judaism has repeated saying for centuries.

David's prayer continues as we listen to God answer, saying, "I will be a father to you, and you shall be a son, to me." "Your throne shall stand firm forever." David is perplexed but these words tell of a far greater temple not made of stones and mortar. The temple at the center of a God's idea begins with the announcement of the Messiah's entry into the human experience.

The beautiful words St. Luke uses, announce the imminent fulfillment of God's promise to David, Israel and in fact all creation, in eloquent detail. The sixth month, in Nazareth of Galilee, the angel Gabriel gets the nod. It's not a king this time, but a young woman, not yet married to a man from David's lineage. But, rejoice, highly favoured daughter, blessed are you among women." Who wouldn't be troubled by such a greeting? Might this be one of those crank calls or spam messages? We can imagine running through the young woman's mind, questions like, what is my family going to think. How am I going explain this to my parents, I still live with them? How is Joseph going to take this news? Any mom would and should challenge Gabriel's authority to name her child. The mechanics with this entire announcement shows a few gaps. Mary can expect an inquiry or maybe even interrogation if she passes it on. She will need help formulating a reasonable response.

Yes, Mary has every right to be perplexed. The young Jewish girl has just learnt, she tested positive, on a pregnancy exam, she didn't request, nor can imagine. Nevertheless, Mary has been selected from among the daughters of Israel. A child of Abraham, and well versed in the Law of the Prophets. Mary too, in other words, comes from good stock. Being well schooled in the Torah, she would almost certainly know the legal penalty that follows these kinds of announcements. Mockery, ridicule, and perhaps the assurance such a scandal, occurs only once. Hiding or fleeing doesn't really offer much of an option. Denying this type of evidence becomes near impossible with each passing month.

But Mary has listened carefully to the message. She accepts and responds, even though she has a couple of concerns. Her brain and heart are solidly connected. We also have questions for God today. The messages before us can also at times overwhelm. But, the Mother of our Lord remains nothing less than a perfect model of discipleship. Her role becomes like a depot for vaccines, receiving and routing souls to her son. Mary, in essence, delivers Jesus, the last mile so to speak.

Today we collect around these Tables of Word and Eucharist, as the voice of angelic lectors described the beginnings of this holy family. Mother saluted with the words "Hail Mary full of grace". It almost sounds as though God reserves the first words of the Holy Rosary for Himself. Perhaps this coming week, many will find a moment to ponder, this wonderful and holy greeting.

St Peter's parish animates the beautiful tradition of praying the rosary before weekday Masses. What a great way to prepare for Holy Eucharist. "The Holy Spirit will also come upon us and the power of the Most High will overshadow us. In other words, the entire Trinity will accompany us for nothing is impossible with God. What's your reply, Mary, or Thomas, Jenifer, and Ron? The last words belong to you and I. "We too are servants of the Lord, but will we respond to God similiarly this Advent, with, let it be done to us as you say.

Amen