

## **FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT B/2005**

In few days we will be celebrating the feast of Christmas. All the readings of this Sunday are preparing us to this great event of our faith. To better understand the importance of this feast, we have to bear in mind that God has a plan of salvation for our world, for our lives and ourselves. God's plan of salvation consists in the fact that he wants to build up a community of life with us; he is willing to become one of us.

We know, however, that if someone has a plan, as in the case of moving out the city, as long as he has not made it public, it remains secret. Once the plan is made known, then friends and companions can understand why during the summer, for instance, while everybody was crazy about sales, he did not buy anything to avoid an excess of things when moving out. St Paul calls such a plan "mystery". As a matter of fact, in today's second reading, St Paul is praising God for the revelation of his secret plan to save all the nations and to bring them under the knowledge of one true God, through faith in Jesus Christ.

God's plan of salvation known only to him from all eternity has been hidden to everybody else. The revelation of this plan explains the role of the prophets and the reason why God has sent them. This is what we find in the first reading. To David who was proposing to build a house to God, the prophet Nathan said, "You will not be the one to build a house to God, but God himself will instead build a stable, solid and eternal house for you".

The prophet is not talking here about a material building made of bricks, but about family and posterity. God, through the word of his prophet, was promising David that a son of his would succeed him and that his dynasty would reign forever; the throne of Israel would always belong to his family. The fulfillment of this prophecy went far beyond what David could ever imagine or even what Nathan intended. They were thinking of an earthly Kingdom, while God gave David a descendant who was really to reign forever, Jesus Christ, the son of Mary.

Once again, we see how God's plans are beyond all expectations. In time of hardship and difficulties, we very often ask God support and help so that all our wishes and plans may be accomplished. His reply goes well beyond our expectations, but he answers our prayers in his own way. He does not always consider our plans or dreams as best for us. He substitutes his own plan for ours and asks us to trust him. Israel was expecting a strong and powerful king; God sent a poor and defenseless child. Such are God's surprises! Blessed are those who, like Mary, as the Gospel shows it welcome them.

As a matter of fact, today's Gospel is all about how God's plan of salvation came to be realized in the person of Jesus Christ as the promised messiah and in the life of Mary as the one who said yes to God. By choosing Mary to be the mother of his son, God associates human beings to his plan of salvation. As he chose in the past

many prophets and famous persons to accomplish various missions on his behalf for the sake of his people, so God chooses a woman to bear his son into the world. On this Sunday we celebrate the humility of God who spouses our humanity, but also the humility of Mary who says yes on our behalf to him. While we are meditating on the mission given to Mary and her free answer, we ask ourselves about our own particular mission the Lord has given us for those under our care. How do we perform it, each of us according to his or her vocation?

By deciding to send his Son into the world, God involves himself in history of mankind; he establishes a New Alliance between Himself and human beings. The “yes” of Mary opens the door to the incarnation. In her humility and her self-effacement Mary allows God to become one of us. By her obedience the kingdom of God has become a reality and humanity has been admitted into God’s heavenly presence for eternity. Without this reminder there would be thousand ways of celebrating Christmas, but Mary shows us the right one: it is only by freely welcoming the one who comes in our hearts that we seal the New Alliance with God.

Let us see how Mary fulfills her mission. When before the greeting of the angel Mary is perplexed and wondering how she could perform such a mission, she recognizes at the same time the fragility of human beings and the grandeur of God. We feel at times too poor and unworthy to stand in front of God. Considering our lives, we find so many sins, so many wrong attitudes and habits. Let us not be discouraged and give up hope of salvation. “Nothing” is impossible to God. Let us never forget that he usually prefers to begin his work where there is poverty and misery.

Let me finish by recalling the answer of Mary: “I am the servant of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word”. What a lesson of generosity, availability, selfless giving up to the plan of God! God calls us, like Mary, to particular missions in life. When we do our best to respond to his call we give evidence to his presence in the world. God calls us to be generous in the missions he has given each of us, but he refuses to be outdone in his response to our generosity. God calls us to do more than build a house for his presence, as David was requiring. But, like Mary, he calls us to be the house of his presence. He calls us to radiate his reality to a world that looks for a savior, that longs for a savior. Let us repeat this little prayer in the silence of our heart: “ O come o come, Emmanuel. Come and give us the strength and the courage to radiate your presence to a waiting world”.



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