

## ***FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT***

*2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38*

Mary was a simple, plain, ordinary person who would be considered an unlikely representative of humankind to give birth to the Saviour? However, that's the answer, isn't it? The flesh that became Jesus came from the body of one who was just like us. The body that gave birth to him, the body that nourished him was just as plain and ordinary and vulnerable as our flesh. Mary, as the mother of Jesus, allowed God to make it absolutely clear that Jesus was truly and fully human. Jesus was truly human, like every one of us in every aspect of our bodies. He was not born wealthy or to a royal family.

Mary was a humble young woman of faith, obedience to God.

She was totally content to be who and what she was, and to do what God gave her to do. She was open to what the angel had to say to her, but honest enough to question how she could possibly conceive and bear a son. Yet she was obedient and did what she was told. She said in reply to God: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

So we can well understand why God chose one so young and inexperienced to be the mother of the Lord. She had not grown old enough to become sceptical or cynical about such things.

She was fresh enough in her humanity to embrace an accepting attitude so that she could hear and heed the word of God's angel. In addition, Mary's faith was uncomplicated and pure enough for her to believe in miracles. She was able to accept a truth that

came from outside human knowledge and beyond human capacity.

Mary had courage. She was willing to stand up to whatever gossip or rejection might come her way because she was pregnant and not married. She was willing to suffer a mother's worst fate, bearing a son who would necessarily be taken from her all too soon. She was willing to give him away so the whole world could have him. Later, she would watch her son walk the rocky road of a controversial religious leader, see him reject her on one occasion, see her son receive threats and abuse. Finally, Mary would stand at the foot of a cross, helplessly watching him die a humiliating death.

In a way, we are presented with the same message as the one declared to Mary by God's angel. Mary, the mother of our Lord, helps us believe in the miraculous possibilities of God, in the truth that only the power of God can produce salvation from the body of an insignificant and ordinary young girl who lived in an obscure village. Mary helps us understand that as God chose her, he chooses us in our commonness and ordinariness to be the continuing instruments of his flesh. She becomes our mother, too, as we live this life together as the body of Christ, in the same plainness of humanity that was made Godly by Christ's sharing it.

We are to be the bearers of the Christ, for our bodies are the only place where he may live on this earth. We are the body of Christ, when we let Christ dwell within us, and when we share Christ with others, God will be with us always. By opening our lives to Christ, we, like Mary, are blessed among all men and women. By sharing Christ, we, like Mary, take part in the greatest, most wonderful thing the world has ever known.

The story about a virgin giving birth, surrounded by shepherds

and kings from afar, is a story about us and about our letting the Holy Spirit touch us so that the Christ begins to stir in our lives.

We have been chosen. The choice is ours to either prepare to receive this gift of new life, or ignore it. That, in the end, is what Christmas is about. It is a story about today and about how each of us has the opportunity to answer the angel as did Mary.

The Angel is telling each of us today, and will continue to whisper in our ear: "Greetings to you, O Favoured One, the Lord is with you."

That means being part of the project that Mary was called to be a part of. It means being an entry point for God's love to come into the world and to deliver people from the power of sin and death. There is nothing more wonderful than that opportunity to bear the Christ, the Saviour, the promised one, the world. That's what each of us is called to do according to the grace given to us.

Advent and Christmas is a time of goodness, a goodness that can last and spread throughout the world, if we indeed do prepare ourselves, if we hope and obey like Mary, for with God nothing is impossible. When we accept God's message to us through the angels, through the prophets, and through Jesus, not only our souls will magnify the Lord, but the souls of every man, woman and child who encounters us, for they will see the promise of God coming true in our lives.

And in the end that's the only thing that will give us joy or happiness or peace. And thanks be to God, it doesn't matter where we are at now, for God is not bound by our limitations.

With God nothing is impossible. And God is with us.

As Christmas Day rapidly approaches, are we ready to receive the reality of God within us? Are we ready to put the Christ within us to work, as we love God and our neighbours as

ourselves?

**AMEN.**