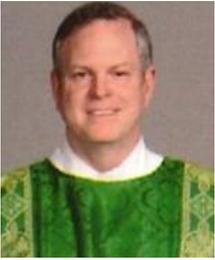


FROM OUR DEACON



As we conclude the Advent season and await the joyful celebration of Jesus' birth at Christmas, this Sunday's gospel focuses not on Jesus but on Mary, His mother. The words that come to mind are humility and faith. These are two of the critical traits that Mary demonstrates and which we are called to exhibit as well. When the angel Gabriel comes to her, Mary humbly places God's plans before those she might have had for herself, and accepts His will without knowing all that it means for her and for us.

Like Mary in today's Gospel we often feel confused, even worried. Mary was understandably confused as to how she could be with child although she had never been with a man. She didn't know exactly how God's plan, and her part in it, was going to unfold. She couldn't have known when she accepted God's invitation and gave her "yes" that she would be the most important woman in human history and that the salvation of all souls – past, present, and future would depend on that response.



Mary doesn't fully understand God's plan, yet she accepts it and does so with great faith and humility – "May it be done to me according to your Word." She didn't have to do this. God didn't force Mary to be the Mother of Jesus. Nor does He force us to do anything. He always respects our dignity and our free will. He wants us to answer his invitation, join in His life - but only by a freely-willed decision on our part. He wants us to put His will before ours, but He gives us the choice.

Mary's choice was made with an uncluttered heart. Many of us become overwhelmed by the clutter that results from singular focus on fulfilling our own desires and plans. We fasten onto various goals or objects and become agitated and frustrated as the obstacles to our supposed happiness inevitably pile up. Mary didn't have that problem. She was someone who, from her youngest days, concentrated purely on finding God and doing His will. She eliminated everything which interfered with this aim.



Mary's complete openness to God and her willingness to cooperate with God's plan of salvation made her a model of our faith from the earliest days of the Church. As we ponder on the events of Jesus' birth and the mystery of the Incarnation, we are reminded to examine our own lives to find out what God's plan is for each of us. Are we preoccupied with our own plans and desires or are we open to doing what God calls us to do, even if that deviates from our plans or even other people's expectations? As we face life's opportunities and challenges, may we have the courage, faith, and humility to honestly say to God "may it be done to me according to your word."

- Deacon Rob

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Waiting

The whole world is filled with wishes. You imagine yourself as knowing what will satisfy your longings. "If only I get this or that, then I'll be happy." But earthly things can never satisfy your deepest craving. When you seek to be filled in anything other than God, God's love, you show that you do not know your own heart. If you think that your longing can be satisfied by wealth success, or if only the people around you behave a little better, you will inevitably end up disappointed.

You are created for God. Only in God can your longing find rest. The continuous hunger and thirst of your body is an image of the continuous hunger of your heart for him who has created you.

All longing has its ultimate end in God. What is so tragic is that we so often seek to be gratified in all possible substitutes. "Seek what you seek, but no where you seek it," says Augustine.

Jesus came into the world to show where you shall and whom you are to long for. "Wait for me," he says, "long for me; I will give you peace. You are created to be one with me." The longing of all humanity is summed up in the prayer of waiting: "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20).



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