

Fr James' homily for The Fourth Sunday of Advent 2020

First Reading: Second Book of Samuel 7:1-16
Second Reading: Romans 16:25-27
Gospel: Luke: 1:26-38



I always think that this Sunday, the last of Advent, is a day of particular wonder and mystery. Sometimes it falls immediately before the start of the celebration of Christmas. Sometimes, as this year, there is a good period the week ahead still to go. This year we hear the great Gospel of the Incarnation, of Mary's Yes to God and thus of her conceiving Jesus in her womb by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the feast we celebrated on 25th March, just as the first lockdown was beginning.

What a difficult, sometimes tragic and sad, always anxious and yet sometimes also surprising and life-affirming nine months we have spent. How many various experiences have we all had in this time. Today in our worship we recall a basic truth: that God is at work, patiently, sometimes to us obscurely and perplexingly, but always faithfully to bring the offer of salvation. Advent is about waiting, and this Sunday is most of all about that.

King David, we hear, wants to build a house. This is not God's plan, but God will use David's intuition and build his own house, a dynasty. But, eventually, as told in the Second Book of Kings, this seemed to end in disaster and brutality with the exile of Israel. (The scholars tell us it was only after the time of exile that all this was retold, not in person to person oral memory, but written down in scriptures.

Forward to Nazareth and Gabriel's greeting to Mary. Her son will have the throne of David, she is told, and instantly she sees how God is being faithful to his plan and promise, despite everything.

We see that God's promise was not a line of kings but the fragile body of his own Son, his very self in which he is pleased to dwell and in so doing to invite all of his creation to enter in and to share his life: Christ is the head and we, through the grace of baptism are his mystical body in the world.

Now we know what the real house of David is to be - it is the Church through the ages and in heaven and Earth. In this sacred space we find safety, peace as well as challenge and encouragement to live, as the scriptures for Christmas Day call us, lives for God in all things. In the experience of so much fear and fragility and frustration this year, the unfolding of God's plan is not, as it never is, in the way we expect or to the timetable we so often demand. So again repeat the message I have used so often

in recent months - let us use the reverses and blows of the pandemic experience to renew ourselves in knowing what is always true: that God is faithful to his promise, and we need all of his grace to ourselves be as open to his possibilities and to his redemptive purposes as is Mary and Joseph.

Alleluia, Come Lord Jesus!
Amen.

Fr James and Fr Tom wish you a blessed Sunday. Keep safe and well, and never hesitate to pick up the telephone and be in touch. See you in church I hope! Keep in close contact with the website for news of how practical plans are developing.