

Homilies from last Sunday

Homily for Fourth Sunday of Advent – Year B

Readings 2 Samuel 7: 1-5, 8-12, 14-16; Romans 16: 25-27; Luke 1: 26-38



Fr Michael says:

The fourth and final candle to complete the Advent Wreath is the one we light to honour Jesus' Mother, as a birth comes closer, so do we focus more and more on the mother. Our Hebrew Testament Reading reminds us of David's desire to build a Temple, now that the City had been built, but God says "no" – He is going to establish an everlasting dynasty for him. This dynasty will lead us to Christ, as Paul reminds us. The Annunciation will proclaim this as a reality, brought to fruition through Mary.

Many people in life, seek fulfilment and happiness through "doing their own thing!" It is I who is at the centre of everything; we are not dependant on anyone and are not answerable to anyone. It is good that we try to achieve what we feel deep down within ourselves, but we do need to be on our guard – there can be quite a bit of selfishness involved here. An important truth comes to the fore – freedom, happiness and fulfilment are more likely to be achieved through acceptance of duty! This needs to be a loving acceptance; otherwise there can be resentment – the more the love, the more we will grow as people as a result of this. Mary points the way for us, she had made firm plans for how she wished to live her life, but what she ended up saying was: "It's not what I want, but what God wants that matters – so let what He wants be done unto me." She made herself a total gift of herself to God, she did not understand all the implications of what she had said, as we see during the times we meet with her in the course of the Gospels. She trusted that the good would be achieved through what was promised and so was open to all possibilities – she gave up control for her life, to let God define her life for her!

We have many duties and responsibilities in the lives that we lead, to ourselves, to others and to God. The world would be in a sorry state, if everyone did what they wanted, irrespective of anything else. If we do accept Mary's approach, we may not find happiness and fulfilment in the eyes of the world, but we will certainly find it in the eyes of God and this is something that deep down we will recognise in ourselves already. The greatest grace in life is when what we have to do is what we want to do!

Sometimes we find people saying that the loneliest time they have is at Christmas, they are really saying "I" am feeling lonely on that day. It is caused mainly by two things: absence and emptiness. Let us spare a thought, a prayer, and maybe a visit for someone who will be on their own – and if while spending Christmas in the midst of others, we still feel lonely, let's not worry. Our hearts are always seeking something more, or rather Someone else: in every human heart there is an empty chamber, waiting for a guest – the Guest who is God!

Reflection for the 4th Sunday of Advent Year B 2014



Fr Tom says:

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the birth-place of King David because his parents had to register for the Roman Census. David like all of us wanted to give God the best and the most venerable place in which to dwell not just a Tent. Yet, when God chooses where he will come to dwell with us he chooses a lowly and lonely place, a place least expected, a manger. Isn't this heart-warming? Whoever we are, whatever we may have done or not done, none of us is too lowly for God to come and dwell with us! He wishes to entrust his life in our hands, and his presence will bring joy, uplift and a sense both of our value and sacredness. The very town chosen even before David was born bears a name which when translated means House of Bread, for our Saviour is the Bread of Life.

A more important and worthy house or home for God was Mary, his mother. This year, the story of the Annunciation is read both on Saturday and Sunday, we cannot announce the coming of the Saviour too often or loud enough.

Common belief is that Mary was very young – 14 or 15 when Gabriel (meaning God is my strength) appeared to her. Yet Mary shows enough maturity, faith and trust in God to say yes to the request. What 14 or 15 year old today would have the courage to say yes to what is seemingly impossible? Think of the struggle and suffering that her decision must have caused her! Who would believe her? If found to be pregnant outside marriage, she could be stoned to death? Why me? Yet she must have been supported by her family and obviously by Elizabeth whom she went to live with to get away from her home town - and of course, Joseph. Yet they, too, must have had their own struggles and heartache. The birth of the baby would have changed all that, as can so often happen in life. Doesn't this reinforce the need for us to struggle with our challenges and difficulties of life – especially when the solutions all seem impossible – and to place them in trust before God? Let us carry our questions to the crib in the manger. The story suggests that the greater the struggle the greater the reward! Gabriel has already come to ask us to give birth to Christ in our lives and promises us, as he did to Mary, the power and strength of God to make it possible.

But Christmas is not about rewards, it is about an inner Joy and uplift that comes from within when in the presence of this new-born baby and for a while in his presence all seems possible. Absolutely no-one is exempted from the request. Our lives are much more like a manger than a castle where kings are normally born. Jesus only asks for somewhere to be born – the surroundings are not important. Jesus' new-born presence in your life will speak of pure goodness, truth and love and, for a while, everything will seem possible and we will touch and be touched by the love, goodness and generosity of the world. Of course this will not last! Even Jesus was rushed off to Egypt to escape an untimely death. But we need this Advent time of waiting, just as Mary did, and the experience of Jesus birth anew will help us face the new challenges that lie ahead with greater courage.

Christ is born to make all things new.

Yes Jesus, you can be born in me!

Glory to God in the Highest! Glory to our Saviour King! Glory to the King of Peace!