

## Thursday of the 4<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent

Yesterday, amidst all the wonder and power of the annunciation, the response demanded belief, trust and acceptance as well as a great helping of love. It is hard to realise that today's readings face the same issues only in this case there is refusal and loss, little or no belief, and no acceptance. The result of which is very, very, different. Non-acceptance leads to an impasse which all too soon turns into hostility which not only blocks growth but destroys it. How very different the acceptance of Mary who not only brought new life into the world but the life of the one who would be the saviour of all that is good, noble and honourable. Given the present situation we could, like the Israelites in the desert, begin to lose faith in God, and, like them, feel abandoned, forget the promise God made to us to bring us life, and turn to other gods. A great danger is to think of the virus as a punishment from God for all the evils and injustices in the world. For decades ecologists and those who truly love creation have warned us that if we do not look after our creation it will begin to break down. Yet, pollution levels throughout the world have been radically reduced allowing creation to breath more fruitfully. The roads are great for cyclists who are out in the numbers in this good weather. I can hear the voices of children playing with their parents; people are finding new ways to help the vulnerable and marginalised, the housebound and the sick. The threat is bringing out the best in people. This is what Jesus saw was possible if people would only accept him. Yet, despite his rejection, his vision is being lived today not only by those who believe but many, many others. For those who lose heart, despair, feel abandoned and have lost their way, we are called to be the voice of Moses and show them that God not only loves them but always, always keeps his promises.

*In looking at great people of the past, we find that they remained undefeated by life's hardships, by life's pounding waves. They held fast to hopes that seemed mere fantastic dreams to other people. They let nothing stop or discourage them from realizing their aspirations. The reason for this, I feel certain, is that their hopes themselves were not directed toward the fulfilment of personal desires of self-interest but based on a wish for all people's happiness, and this filled them with extraordinary conviction and confidence.*  
(TODA)

Jesus wants us to be people of HOPE!