

Homily 4th Sunday of Advent Year B – 2020

The O antiphon today is: *O Key of David and sceptre of the House of Israel; you open and no one can shut; you shut and no one can open: Come and lead the prisoners from their prison, those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.* On lighting the fourth candle, the circle of light is complete. The final Candle is called the candle of LOVE. It heralds the love that will come to us in the form of the Christ child. This love, as the antiphon suggests, frees us from all harm, all the dark secrets of the past, all that weighs us down, all that imprisons us. This love brings light into our darkness and melts away our fears. This love acts as our shield. The circle of light reminds us that this love is never ending. It holds us now and for all eternity. The Annunciation is a powerful reminder that in baptism we were made into temples of the Holy Spirit, like Mary. Temples where God can dwell. Temples where God not only wants to dwell but prefers to dwell. At Christmas that divine presence, that love, is renewed, refreshed and enriched within us; a presence that fills us with wonder and awe.

Gift of Wonder (Rev. Alfred McBride, O. Praem., THE PRIEST, Oct. '87, p.26)

Each year, God asks us to shed one more coat of awareness, one more dream state and come alive to the vision of God's plan for each of us and the world-at-large. The older we grow, the harder this is to do. As children we had a sense of wonder. Our eyes were wide open, drinking in the fascinating gifts we beheld. Our thirsty souls could not have enough of the wonders of creation. Then, somehow, we grew too old to dream. We tired of the abundance of the world, or at least grew weary of keeping up with the feast of life, and stepped away from the banquet of life. The natural gift of wonder God gave us as children was meant to be kept alive. Instead, we let wonder go to sleep. We entered the typical dream state of most humans. Why else does Jesus tell us to *'Stay awake!'* Advent says, *'Wake up and realize the gifts of love you have received.'* Psychology says, *'Let go.'* Spirituality says, *'Wake up.'* In both cases there is a withdrawal from the busyness of daily life (our dream state) and a waking up to the subconscious and spiritual depths of ourselves.

- Why is it that people say they "slept like a baby" when babies wake up every two hours?
- Why do banks charge a fee on "insufficient funds" when they know there is not enough?
- What is the speed of darkness?
- If the temperature is zero outside today and it's going to be twice as cold tomorrow, how cold will it be?
- If it's true that we are here to help others, what are the others doing here?