



ADVENT 4

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December 20, 2020
Anglican Parish of Raymond Terrace
www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org

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Pray:

May I speak to you in the name of GOD – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen



Throughout the ages, GOD has been working like an artist in a studio. He had given glimpses into what He was doing – as though giving people the opportunity to look into the studio and see the picture taking shape. There are hints throughout the Old Testament – going back as far as Genesis 3 and the promises to David in 2 Samuel 7, our first reading for today. For the most part the full glory of what GOD was doing has been hidden. But the curtain was about to be pulled back so that the full picture could be seen in all its glory. This is what Paul means when he writes to the Romans about the mystery – not something strange but something yet to be fully revealed.

When Gabriel comes to Mary, we see more of what the picture will finally look like; but still do not see the whole.

We can be grateful to GOD not only for what He has been preparing His people, but also for the fact that He has given us the hints. The prophets have seen the good news but not fully understood it. Mary is not only the recipient but the bearer – in more sense than one – of that good news. Throughout the history of the promise there has been a series of unlikely and in some cases miraculous births – Sarah in Genesis 18, Rebekah in Genesis 25, Ruth, and Elizabeth and Mary stand in that line. Mary’s cooperation is essential. Gabriel’s news must have been extremely disturbing and confusing as Mary’s response shows. But thankfully, she is prepared to listen and do what GOD asks. Her obedience is good news. So, while we celebrate GOD’s amazing plan, let’s also celebrate all the people who had a part in that – and face up to the challenge to do what we can – to be and to bring good news to others.



One of the few Greek words I remember from my student days is [^]Theotokos – translated as “GOD Bearer”. Mary

bore the living GOD inside her. When I became a student of the Diocese prior to my ordination, I left St Mary's Maitland – so this is a word with special significance for me. Try and imagine what it may have been like for a young teenage girl – perhaps 14 years old – going through this experience. She was engaged to be married – not allowed these days unless given approval by a court of law. Then she is visited by the archangel Gabriel – who tells her that she will become pregnant, not by her fiancé, Joseph, but by the Holy Spirit of GOD. The Holy Spirit would overshadow her and make her a tabernacle – a home – for JESUS – much like the Spirit of the Most High did when the glory of GOD filled the temple in Isaiah and the tent of meeting in the desert so that Moses could not enter. No wonder Mary was much perplexed by Gabriel's words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Gabriel said to Mary "do not be afraid, for you have found favour with GOD. What a strong woman she became. Mary is often called THE FIRST DISCIPLE because of her relationship to

CHRIST, her Son. The words DISCIPLE and DISCIPLINE have the same basis for meaning and refer to someone who learns, who studies, and who follows a certain teacher or set of teachings. It seems that even before Mary knew of her calling to become the mother of GOD incarnate, she must have already learned her faith well – from her parents, from rabbis and other holy men and women – and perhaps even from the ritual practices of her faith. To fully be a disciple, we must not be solely a student but be in a relationship with the teacher. If we strive ONLY to learn, we fall short. We need to have space – like Mary – to at times be troubled and pensive and to ask questions. Otherwise, if we do not allow room for such experiences, we can't truly expect to become the fullest expression of what it means to be a disciple. Mary's difficulty lay not so much with her age but in that she is not married and is a virgin. JESUS, on the other hand, is not just a prophet – like John – but is “the Son of the Most-High, “the Son of GOD” who is also to sit on the throne of David. We call JESUS the Son of GOD

because we believe that JESUS is truly GOD, AND truly human. Through His divine nature, He is the begotten Son of GOD. Through His human nature, He is the Son of Mary and the foster son of Joseph. Joseph is a descendant of King David. JESUS is considered the Son of David. About a thousand years before the birth of JESUS, GOD promised King David that someday one of His descendants would rule Israel forever. This Son of David would be the Messiah – the One who had been promised long ago to save the people from all who were oppressing them. Mary has a special role in GOD’s plan. This is a special example of GOD’s love for Mary – that He chose her to be the mother of JESUS. GOD had done many wondrous things – calling prophets, performing miracles, leading the people from slavery to freedom and the like. Never before, though, had He done anything like this. In Mary’s womb, GOD took on human flesh. The incarnation. This may also have connections to Isaiah 7 since Immanuel means “GOD with us”.



In the first reading, GOD chastises David, the King, for believing it is up to him to build a house for GOD to dwell in. In the Gospel, we find GOD gladly choosing to make a home in Mary, the young woman from Nazareth. Such is the kind of dwelling that GOD desires – not one made of stone, brick, or marble – but one within the hearts of people.

Sometimes those in authority over us ask us to do things we don't understand. Along with our children, we ask the WHY question more often than not. The maturing Christian learns that GOD explains reasons sometimes, but other times he does not. In Deuteronomy 29:29 it says this: ²⁹The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the revealed things belong to us and to our children for ever, to observe all the words of this law. Knowing that GOD sees everything provides a solid foundation for our obedience. MARY simply obeyed. Joseph, when he learned of the situation, wanted to dismiss Mary quietly. But as practically hard and publicly

humiliating as it might have been, Joseph ultimately obeyed GOD's instructions and stayed engaged to Mary – so when we might be tempted to steal away and go off on our own tangent, GOD is watching over the whole situation and so, we should follow His instructions.



From our Newsletter this week, we spoke about the love GOD has for us. Think about this: we bring the Father, Son and Holy Spirit sheer bliss. Before we continue to read, give this truth a couple of moments to sink in. We delight GOD's heart, and He is not disappointed with us. When He thinks of us, He is stirred with joy. GOD does not mark us by our failures. He sees us through the sacrifice of perfect love. Even when we are displeased with ourselves, He's standing with His arms wide open, ready to flood us with grace. We are our own worst critics. We judge ourselves much more harshly than the LORD does. Remember, He sees us with the finished product in mind. He doesn't look at us and wonder how He will ever mature us to the point of perfection. Even

when He corrects us, it's done with the conviction of tender love. It is with pleasure that He knows us. And He truly knows us – more than anyone else in the world – and we still bring Him joy.

I'd like to finish today with a music video: MARY DID YOU KNOW? I hope you enjoy it. ^

May we pray:

This we pray in the name of JESUS. Amen

Life Application Study Bible

Daily Prayer 2020

All Age Lectionary Services – Year B Copyright Scripture Union 2011

Living Liturgy – Spirituality, Celebration and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities 2021. Liturgical Press Collegeville Minnesota

Celebrating the Lectionary – Year B – Garratt Publishing.

www.oremus Bible Browser: Deuteronomy 29:29