

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 20, 2020

Year B RCL

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Canticle 15; Luke 1:26-38

**“You will conceive in your womb and bear a son,
and you will name him Jesus.”**

By: The Rev. Fr. Fabian Villalobos

The gospel that we heard today in some way is possible to define as the center of the Christian history. Commonly, it is known as the gospel of the annunciation and represents the sublime moment where God reveals through the angel Gabriel that history is will change with the Incarnation of Jesus. God choose to become human to be close to us forever. The young virgin of Nazareth does not know that her decision to cooperate with God would lead her to be linked to all humanity forever.

The gospel of Luke describes in detail the meeting between the angel and Mary the chosen one. "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." This introduction shows how God interjects in the human history. In calling her "favored one" it is possible to see the predilection God has over the women that would be the mother of Jesus. In adding the, "Lord is with you" manifests that all future events that are coming to Mary would be possible to endure only because the Lord is with her. This is important insofar as it shows that it is not the superhumanity of Mary that allows her participation in the path of salvation. Instead, the presence of God chooses her because of her human and religious qualities. Mary then generously at the end of the dialogue with the angel freely collaborates with God's invitation trusting the words of the messenger and showing total obedience and submission to the divine call.

After receiving the angel Gabriel's greetings. "She was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be." This human response allows us to verify the originality and uniqueness of this narrative. A human being is in front of the mystery represented in an angel. The presence of angels as messengers of God is not new. The Old Testament has different descriptions of moments when angels were sent to specific people to deliver

messages. What makes this encounter special is that the messenger, more than delivering a regular message, is saying that humanity is going to be redeemed, restored and given a second chance after the great fall.

“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.” This declaration of “Do not be afraid” is how the gospel of Luke (1:7; 1:26-27; 2:10; 5:10; 8:50; 12:32), reassures the people each time that there is an interruption of the divine initiative in the daily human life. The gospel manifests in that expression that God is in control, and we are called to trust and obey. These words of comfort, “Do not be afraid” have been placed intentionally in the gospel to be read in each circumstance that represents an obstacle and impediment to fully allow God to work.

In this moment of an especially painful year that has brought death and sorrow worldwide due to the global pandemic, it is worth hearing the special words of Luke’s gospel, “Do not be afraid”. Our history like Mary’s and any human history is always in God’s hands. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was present also in the excruciating moments of the crucifixion and was able to endure all that sorrow and distress only because God was with her, the

“favored one! The Lord is with you.” This is also true for every Christian as we journey in our lives with God.

Mary’s presence in the gospel as being the Mother of the Messiah, brings each believer in Jesus to determine for themselves, in what way Mary’s occurrence helps or hinders their personal journey of faith. There are Christian traditions and denominations that exalt her presence to the extreme of proclaiming her almost equal to God. While other denominations go to the extreme of denying any special participation of Mary being the “favored one” in the path of salvation, making her equal to any other person and not the mother of the Messiah.

A correct doctrine recognizes in Mary a distinctive place, never equal to God and never a mere physical transaction whereby God uses her to embody Jesus. The fact that she is present in the four canonical gospels, the Creeds, the writing of the Early Church Fathers, the comments of the Reformers, and the overall Christian tradition, shows that Mary the Mother of Jesus, the Virgin of Nazareth, deserves a prudent association with the way how God’s Incarnation has changed human history.

The gospel of Luke which mentions many more women than the other gospels shows in Mary an example of discipleship in obedience and humility. The Song of Mary, the Magnificat found in Luke 1:46-55 (Today's Canticle 15), is an example of how Mary gives testimony of the power of God working through her. As we conclude our Advent journey, it is important to understand that only if we collaborate with God, he can help us reach all the potential that he has placed in us, exactly how did with Mary, his "favored one." While we prepare to celebrate Jesus' Incarnation, it is appropriate to learn from Mary the faithful servant of the Lord, who said yes, "let it be with me according to your word." Amen.