

Commentary for the 4th Sunday of Advent



The mystery had been kept secret for ages. Then the prophets spoke about it. It really began with the prophecy of Nathan to King David, one thousand years before Christ. David had thought it was his pious duty to build a Temple to house the Ark of the Covenant. At first Nathan agreed with him, but then God spoke to Nathan and sent him to David with this message: “You want to build a house for me, but I will build the House of David. My son will come from you, one of your descendants. He will be the Eternal King.” This is the first time that the anointed of the Lord, the Messiah, was spoken of.

A thousand years would pass, and then God made known His plan to all people. The Messiah would not be a hidden mystery, known only to the Jews. The Messiah would be revealed to all the nations, so that all may submit to God in faith through Jesus Christ. The plan began with a simple scene: an angel, Gabriel by name, appeared to a young girl, the Virgin Mary, and told her that she would have a child conceived not through a man, but through the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. St. Bernard put it so beautifully: the angel asked and mankind waited for Mary’s reply.

St. Paul concludes his Letter to the Romans with this Sunday’s second reading. This was God’s plan all along. The prophets revealed it, but then the Plan took effect through Mary, all so we can have a union of obedient love to God our Father through Jesus Christ.

Each one of us has part of this plan. We might not be the founder of the dynasty like David, nor the mother of the Savior like Mary, but we are called to lead others to Bethlehem, to lead others to our Lord. Sometimes we lose this with all the hectic running around necessitated more by cultural and custom than by the reality of the Birth of Jesus. So we become like the audience of a children’s Christmas Pageant, listening to well worn words, and getting caught up in the romance of the

celebration of the birth of a Special Child.

But we are not merely part of the audience. We are actors in the eternal Christmas pageant. Like the shepherds and the magi, angels and stars are calling us to worship Jesus. Like Mary, we can make the spiritual physical. No, we can't give birth to the Savior, but we can make His Presence a reality in the world.

How? By being people of God.

God calls us to particular missions in life. These missions might be to be a faithful and faith-filled husband or wife, father or mother, grandmother or grandfather. The mission may be to be a single man or woman with the time to extend God's love to others. The mission may be, right now, to be a holy widow or widower, offering the love cultivated during marriage to those around you. The mission may be to be a good little boy or girl, or a good teenager or young adult, learning how to love as God loves, sacrificially. When we do our best to respond to His call we give evidence to His Presence in the world.

People are not just physical. People are physical and spiritual. When we view someone as a Man of God, Woman of God, or Child of God, Teen of God, we see the total person body and soul. When others view us, any of us, as a Person of God, they see us as in our totality, physical and spiritual.

We are called to make the spiritual within us a reality in the world outside of us. We are called to help others recognize their ability to be spiritual.

God calls us to do more than build a house for His Presence. He calls us to be the House of His Presence. He calls us to radiate His Reality to a world that looks for a Savior, that longs for a Savior.

We need to stop selling ourselves short. We are part of the wonder of the plan. We are part of the wonder of the Word Made Flesh, the Wonder of Christmas. People in our families, in our neighborhoods, people we associate with at work, people we know, and people we do not know, all need us to bring the Presence of the Lord to them.

Gabriel spoke to Mary and the world waited for her answer. God speaks to each of us throughout our lives, and the world waits for our answers. For we are not Christians for ourselves, we are Christians to bring God to others and to serve God in others.

O Come O Come, Emmanuel. Come and give us the strength and the courage to radiate your presence to a waiting world.

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