

## Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Dec 20th 2017

Although today is Wednesday of the 3rd week of Advent, the readings are those especially assigned to December 20th, as is the case for all weekdays between the 17th and the 24th of December. Today's readings present us with two significant contrasts.

The first contrast is between today's gospel reading and the first readings of both yesterday and other past days of the Advent season. In those readings we are told of a child conceived as God's answer to a woman's request: Manoaah's wife, Sarah, Hannah, Elizabeth. In today's gospel reading the conception of Jesus is a woman's answer to God's request. This is the first contrast, indeed quite a contrast.

A second contrast is Mary's reaction to Gabriel's announcement compared to that of Zechariah's, when told of Elizabeth's coming pregnancy: how do I know? Give me a sign. I suspect that Zechariah was sorry he asked for a sign that cost him his speech until after the child was born. Mary does not ask for a sign. She does ask a question, yet it is not a question of doubt, but rather a question asking for guidance: how do I go about what you are asking of me? A second contrast.

God is offering us signs in the events and circumstances of our daily living. But, as Vatican II challenges us, we need to recognize the signs –signs of the times– that are already there and for this we need a faith vision. Events and circumstances are only data and they are the same for both believers and unbelievers. Faith vision helps us to find in them a faith meaning, which in turn leads us to a faith response to the same data.

O KEY OF DAVID,

and Scepter of the House of Israel,

who opens and no one shuts,

who shuts and no one opens:

Come, and bring forth the captive from his prison,

he who sits in darkness and in the shadow of death.

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