

Integral Faith

"Homily helps and liturgy resources highlighting care for our common home."



Homily Resources and Petitions for the 4th Sunday of Advent, Cycle B (24 December 2017)

Homily Helps

† Scripture passages to note:

2 Samuel 7: "Go, tell my servant David, "Thus says the Lord: Should you build me a house to dwell in? Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand forever."

Psalms 89: The promises of the LORD I will sing forever; through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness.

Romans 16: ...the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret for long ages...made known to all nations to bring about the obedience of faith...

Luke 1: "Behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father."

Mary said, "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."

† Comment for the day:

David wanted to build a house for God. The prophet Nathan applauded. But God had other ideas. Instead, God recounted all he had already done for David, continued to do for David, and would do for David. This rebuttal of sorts serves as a reminder that we live by the generosity of God, and not the other way around.

And rather than construct for David a physical shelter, as David has proposed to do for God, God promised David a living house, a line of descendants, that would stand firm forever. Here it is worth pointing out that while we humans often think in terms of static and fixed structures, God summons us to contemplate how we might be part of a living structure, be it a dynastic house or the living temple of God, the Church.

A thousand years after David a small band of disciples gathered around Jesus came to believe that God's final promise to David was fulfilled in the life, death and resurrection of the Nazarene. *He is the Messiah whose throne will last forever.* Yet Joseph, father of Jesus and descendent of David, was a modest craftsman living in an insignificant town in Galilee. Though the house of David was still in existence, it was of humble estate, reminiscent of David's own origins. Despite these humble circumstances, as St. Paul writes, "the mystery kept secret for long ages" would appear to "bring about the obedience of faith."

Homily Helps (cont.)

† **Comment for the day (cont.):**

And so, out of the blue, Mary of Nazareth is visited, not by an angel but an archangel, emphasizing the importance of the message he bears. Despite her humble background, her child will be given the throne of David. And despite his royal pedigree, he will be rejected by the religious and political elites of his time and suffer a shameful death. And Mary will suffer along with him. Yet in the end God will exalt him. This message will turn Mary's life upside down and lead her to places that she never imagined.

Overwhelmed though she certainly was, Mary replies, "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."

Gabriel recognizes Mary's profound acceptance of God's work in her life in his greeting, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." Thus Mary is the model of what St. Paul calls "the obedience of faith." Because she was able to listen deeply to the voice of God as spoken in the depths of her life, she was likewise able to respond to the voice of God spoken by the archangel. More, her obedience did not end with her response to Gabriel. It continued day by day as she lived out her 'yes' to God amidst all the changes and challenges that her life brought to her.

Mary inspires us to listen to God's call. We do this in prayer. We also do this by being attentive to what is happening in our lives – as individuals, as communities, as a society, as a civilization. If we are attentive, with God's grace we can begin to discern God's call in our lives and our world. Pope Francis provides an excellent example of this, summoning us to care for God's creation. We need to open our eyes and ears to what is happening to our mother the Earth and the possibilities to heal her that are still available.

Thus there is another house that we need to concern ourselves with. It is our common home, the Earth. And as it turns out "eco" in the word "ecology" comes from the Greek word for 'house' or 'household.' Pope Francis wrote his encyclical *Laudato si'* because he discerned God's call to the household of the faith to accept his urgent challenge to protect our common home. No home created by us, however lavish and comfortable can substitute for the beautiful home created by God. This is a living house that we are called to cherish.

† **Passages from *Laudato si'* to note:**

Theological and philosophical reflections on the situation of humanity and the world can sound tiresome and abstract, unless they are grounded in a fresh analysis of our present situation, which is in many ways unprecedented in the history of humanity. (#17)

Humanity is called to recognize the need for changes in lifestyle, production and consumption in order to combat this warming or at least the human causes that produce or aggravate it. (#23)

We seem to think that we can substitute an irreplaceable and irretrievable beauty with something we have created ourselves. (#34)

Yet we are called to be instruments of God our Father, so that our planet might be what he desired when he created it, and correspond with his plan for peace, beauty and fullness. (#53)

Related Prayers of the Faithful

Option 1: For our government officials, that they might open their eyes and ears to the need to care for our common home and enact laws and regulations that provide protection for the earth and all living beings, let us pray to the Lord...

Option 2: For all of us, that we have the courage to make changes in our lifestyle that foster peace, beauty and the flourishing of creation, let us pray to the Lord...

Further Resources

Feedback: Info@CatholicClimateCovenant.org

Webpage: www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/resource/english-homily-help

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