

Homily – Deacon Don  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent -December 19/20, 2020

After the fall in the Garden of Eden, Adam was walking with his sons Cain and Abel. As they passed by the ruins of the Garden of Eden, one of the boys asked, “What’s that?” Adam replied, “Boys, that’s where your mother ate us out of house and home.”

Today is the fourth Sunday of Advent. Just a few more days until Christmas! We hear today the glorious story of Mary’s YES that she gave to the Angel Gabriel. The Yes that allows us to say and believe, “Jesus our hope is in you!” The restoration of the hope that failed with the disobedience in the Garden of Eden.

Angels are very popular today. They’re shown as cute objects with wings, yet those who were visited by the angels in the Bible weren’t very thrilled! The people in the Bible knew that when God sent an Angel to visit you, things were about to change in their lives, usually some major re-arrangement was going to happen.

When the Angel Gabriel said; “Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you.” We hear; “But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.” Gabriel continues to explain, and although troubled by his words, Mary proclaims; “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.”

With those words, a spark of light entered our world as deep within Mary’s body, a baby began to form. With those words, a new universe of obedience to God began. Those words are Mary’s response to the call and promise of God! She surrenders to the will of God!

“Surrender” is not a word we like to hear because it sounds weak. But when said in response to God, it’s heroic. Those words of Mary changed not only Mary’s life but also the life of the world. When we utter those words to God, “I am the servant of the Lord, may it be done to me according to your word” they are also heroic because we are changed and so is part of our world.

We admire and revere the moment of the Annunciation, but what can we learn from it? Is this reading just about Mary? Or is it in some profound way about us? Are we willing to obey God when His call comes to us? We most likely won't see a winged archangel with a message, but God's call comes in various ways.

**Can we say**, "I am the servant of the Lord" when we experience a change in our life such as: *a job transfer, or when a spouse is afflicted with Alzheimer's disease, or when we hear we have cancer, or when the burdens of age start to weaken our bodies, or when we carry the cross of addiction or one of the capital sins, or in a time of change when the Church calls us to widen our vision?* **Can we say**, "I am the servant of the Lord" *in how we use our prosperity, or when the Lord calls us to walk a road on which we had not planned or with people whom we would not otherwise be with?*

Let's not domesticate the Annunciation and leave it only as a devotional scene. Let's start to see it as a moment which challenges us. Are we willing to surrender to God as Mary did? Are we willing to let God truly be Immanuel (God with us)?

In this season of Advent, as we prepare for the coming of the Lord, are we willing to let God come into our life if: *He comes with a word of challenge, or a call of commitment, or He comes with a summons to be patient, heroic, cooperative, loyal, or especially prayerful?*

Are we willing to say, "I am the servant of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word"? If we can (and sometimes it takes a long time to say it and mean it), then we will truly be ready for Christmas – the coming of the Lord into our life, making our life not just a series of personal plans, but a dwelling place of God's light and love and His will. "Jesus our hope is in you!"

To honor Mary and her Yes, please pray a Hail Mary with me now. **Hail Mary full of Grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed are thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus. Holy Mary Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.**