

**HOMILY**  
**4th Sunday of Advent**  
**December 18-19, 2021**

The first job I got after I graduated from college was working for the State of Michigan, and I was 22 or 23 years old. Very quickly, the Area Administrator, the head of the office, saw something in me, affirmed me and became a very important mentor for me. He was a blessing. I was promoted very quickly and was soon working very closely with him. He really built my confidence and taught me a great deal. He was very important to me when I was just starting out in the work world. Eventually, he left the state and moved to Hawaii. I never had any contact with him after he left the state. Several months ago I was talking about him with my niece. I told her that I wondered what happened to him as I have had no contact with him for about 30 years. She immediately got on social media and within a couple of minutes she knew that he was still in Hawaii with his wife and knew all kinds of things about him. She is in a nursing program now, but if that does not work out I think she should be a private investigator. Two weeks later, out of the blue after 30 years, I get an email from him. My niece told me she had nothing to do with this, but I don't know. He told me that he thought it was great that I had become a priest and really affirmed me, blessed me, just like he did when I worked with him. I was glad to hear from him because I got the chance to tell him how important he was to me when I was just starting out in the work world and I got a chance to thank him. In the Gospel reading today, Mary has just found out that she was going to be the mother of Jesus and she set out in haste to see her Aunt Elizabeth. The first thing her Aunt Elizabeth did was bless her: "Blessed are you among women..." No judgment, just a blessing. This is a little surprising because having a child outside of marriage is pretty accepted today, but it was not accepted 2,000 years ago in Israel. Women could be legally stoned to death for this, and it was fairly likely that your family would disown you, and a woman alone in Israel with no man to take care of her would have to really struggle to stay alive. But Aunt Elizabeth blesses her, and I am sure that this meant a great deal to Mary. And Mary stayed with her for three months. I am sure that they had many discussions during this time, but I am sure the blessing was incredibly important. 2 Getting back to my mentor boss, my father died when I was 15 years old, so I never got to be an adult with him. He never blessed me as an adult because he was no longer around. I did not realize it when I was in my 20's, but I think I really needed a father figure in my life to bless me, to affirm me, and that is what he did. I think adult

men need to be blessed, or affirmed, by their fathers or a father figure. If they are not, they can spend many years unconsciously looking for this. In general, I think the older generation needs to bless or affirm the younger generation. Specifically, adult men need to be blessed by their father or a father figure. Adult women need to be blessed by their mother or a mother figure. I think we bless our young children. I hear parents doing this all of the time. But when our children become teenagers, you hardly recognize them anymore. Who came and took my child? And I want to talk specifically about men now. When my son becomes an adult he is younger and stronger than I am and I am a little threatened that he will want to take over, and I am not quite ready to give up my leadership role yet. We need to hang on to our virility, isn't that right. Example: Several years ago I went to the Grand Canyon. I was looking at things to do there and I saw that you could hike to the bottom of the Grand Canyon, camp at the bottom, and then climb back up. I also read that this is very difficult and you need to train to be able to do this. I decided that I wanted to do this to prove that I still can. These young guys have nothing on me. Then I thought about it for a while. I hate to camp. I really do not want to do this; I just want to prove that I still can. So I gave it up. This is an example that is specific to men, but I think there are similar things between women. We may be afraid that the younger generation is younger than we are, stronger than we are, more attractive than we are, have more energy than we have, are more productive than we are, and on and on, and they are. And they are supposed to be. That is the way it is supposed to be. We need to bless them and turn things over to them. So, older generation, bless the younger generation. Fathers and father figures, bless your adult sons. Mothers and mother figures, bless your adult daughters. That is our job.

Love & Peace,

Fr. Jim