

**2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16**

**Psalm 89**

**Romans 16:25-27**

**Luke 1:26-38**

**Homilist: Deacon Mike Mocek**

**December 24, 2017**

Welcome to the Fourth Week of Advent. But hold on to your hats, because it will be the shortest week you have ever experienced. For us, liturgically, the week begins with this Mass in anticipation of the Fourth Sunday of Advent, and will end at 4:00 p.m. tomorrow when we begin celebrating The Nativity of the Lord with our first Christmas Vigil Mass. For this short, 23-hour week, some of you may be hoping for the shortest homily you have ever heard. No such luck.

The Scriptural readings of the first three Sundays of Advent directed our attention primarily to the second coming of Christ, helping us prepare for Christ to return in glory and majesty at the end of time to, once and for all, conquer evil and death in this world. But on this Fourth Sunday, our attention is focused more on remembering the incarnation of Jesus, the Word made flesh. More specifically, we reflect on the events and circumstances leading to the humble birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. Today's readings give us perfect context for that reflection. In our first reading from the Old Testament Second Book of Samuel, we see King David making plans to build a temple, a dwelling place for God. But through the prophet Nathan, David soon learns that God had other plans. God's plan was not to be set apart in a temple, but to be united with David and the people in a kingdom where God could dwell among us forever. Our second reading, taken from the conclusion of Saint Paul's letter to the Romans, is one long sentence of praise to God. Paul reminds us that everything comes from God, and he calls all nations to bring about the obedience of faith. Obedience of faith is not a demand for blind submission, but instead, it is a call to active listening so that we might first understand and then follow.

In today's Gospel from Luke, Mary gives us the ultimate example, or model, for obedience of faith. The word obedience does not appear anywhere in this reading, but the story is all about Mary's obedience, about her openness to the Word of God, as God's Word was revealed to her by the angel Gabriel, and about her willingness to follow the Word and allow it to change her life in ways she could hardly imagine. This Gospel reading gives us some of the most profound quotes in all of Holy Scripture. First, the angel Gabriel addresses Mary with words that have become most familiar to us in prayer, "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" Then, sensing Mary's anxiety, Gabriel adds, "Do not be afraid," a message that was to be repeated by Jesus many times throughout his earthly ministry to all who would listen. And finally, after hearing all that Gabriel had to tell her, Mary replied very simply, "May it be done to me according to your word." With this response, it is important to note that Mary did not pretend to know the will of God nor did she ask for detailed guidance. She was not afraid, and she did not try to take charge. Neither did she try to negotiate for a better deal. Rather, she placed her faith and her trust in God, and she said, "Yes."

Have you ever wondered what a different world this might be if we could all do just a little better job of following Mary's example of saying "Yes" to God? What if, instead of living in fear or trying to take charge of our surroundings, we embraced the fact that God alone is in charge, as most of us have been reminded over and over again in our lives? What if, instead of pretending to know the will of God, and trying to impose our perception of God's will on others, we placed our trust in God and opened our hearts and lives to the acceptance of God's will. Maybe that is the plan that God revealed to King David through Nathan in our first reading. Maybe then we could truly start building the kingdom on earth, making room for

God to dwell with us in this life as we prepare to dwell in fullness with God in the next.