

Fourth Sunday of Advent – Dec. 23-24, 2017

Last Sunday, Gaudete Sunday, the word of God was full of joy as we reflected on God's promises of restoration and rebuilding of the world and how that promise of God was being fulfilled through Christ bringing God's presence and reign into the world.

The joy of last Sunday was in part a joy about the redemption that Christ's Coming has already brought to our world, but it was also a joy of anticipation and looking forward to the full celebration of Christ's birth and Christmas -- joy in the hope of redemption that has already taken place and is taking place – but is yet to be fully realized.

This 4th Sunday of Advent – it is time to bring all of this joyful hope in God's promises home.

It is time to bring this external joy of all these reflections of hope in God's promises home into our own personal life and the relationships that make up our life. All this joyful thanks and hoping is good, but now it is time to make it all real and practical in our life. Let it truly come into our life.

This is what we see in today's Scriptures -- especially in the wonderful story of David's plans to build a temple for God.

King David had been very busy leading the Israelites in battles to conquer the land of Palestine for Israel, but finally things were now more peaceful for Israel. David had time to think about things other than battle.

He saw that the ark of God's covenant and their place of worship of God was still maintained in a movable tent as it had been since the days of Moses. King David wants to build a more beautiful and permanent temple for God and for the people to worship in.

It all sounds good --- doesn't it?

But God's plans are different. King David's plans are to build a temple for God, but God's blueprints include building up the house of David and Israel.

David wants to build a house for God, but God is more concerned about building a house for David and for us.

Through the prophet , Nathan, God says to David:

- **I will make you forever like the great ones of the earth**
- **I will fix a place for my people Israel**
- **I will give you rest from your enemies and establish a home for you.**
- **I will raise up an heir after you – through him your house and your kingdom shall endure forever.**

David wants to bless God and do something for him, but God's plan is always about what he wants to do for David and Israel and all of us.

We have all in some way done things to honor God and to prepare for the celebration of Christmas with our families, friends and community. But now, God wants to change the focus from himself and others to us. It's time for us to receive in a new and deeper way the blessing and gift that he has for us.

We have taken time and effort in various ways to make a place for Christmas and the celebration of Christ's birth, but now God wants to bring all of this preparation home and put the focus on us.

His plan is not so much what we do for him, but what he wants to do for us and the support that he wants to give to us. Above all, he want to personally come to each of us.

As we have made some place for him, he now wants to make a place in us – a temple in each

one of us where he can come and dwell in us through the person of Jesus.

The fulfillment of God's plan for us that was announced to David is seen in Mary in today's Gospel. God comes to Mary and to us asking us to allow him to come into us and into the world through us.

This is the great mystery hidden from long ages, says St. Paul in the second reading, but now revealed and manifested through the prophets and made known to all through Christ.

The angel said to Mary, --- The Lord is with you. Do not be afraid. – “The one to be born in you will be great and called Son of the Most High. he will receive from God the throne of David his father and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

What we are about to celebrate is the fulfillment of the great promise God made to David in the first reading. --- Mary was deeply troubled and moved by what the angel said to her, yet Mary accepted the tremendous responsibility that God had chosen for her and proclaimed a confident and joyful yes.

She trusted that the Lord was with her as the angel had said in his opening greeting to her.

Just as Mary felt overwhelmed by the angel's greeting and message, so can we feel overwhelmed by the intense love God has for us.

However, to come and be born in us in new and deeper ways is God's plan that he wants to bring home and into our lives these Christmas days.

As Advent comes to a close, may we allow ourselves to find peace in the knowledge that God has a plan for each one of us and trust that God is with us every hour of the day and that we need only to ask for the strength we need to overcome any challenges.

May we all respond with Mary's help to God's invitation and say --- "Come Lord Jesus." May it be done to me according to your Word."