

## Fourth Sunday of Advent, Cycle B, Sunday, December 24, 2023

The angel Gabriel visits Mary to announce the birth of Jesus

### First Reading

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

The Lord promises David that he will raise from his descendents a kingdom that will endure forever.

### Responsorial Psalm

*Psalm 89:2-5,27,29*

A prayer of praise to the Lord for his faithfulness to his covenant.

### Second Reading

*Romans 16:25-27*

Paul praises God for making his revelation known.

### Gospel Reading

*Luke 1:26-38*

The angel Gabriel visits Mary to announce the birth of Jesus.

### Background on the Gospel Reading

This Sunday we read the story of the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary about the birth of Jesus. This story is found only in Luke's Gospel. On this fourth Sunday of Advent, the liturgy shifts our attention from John the Baptist to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Both John and Mary serve as important figures for our reflection during the season of Advent; they both played instrumental roles in preparing the way for Jesus. Last week we reflected on John the Baptist's announcement that the Savior was among us, although not yet recognized. This week we reflect upon Mary's example of faith and obedience to God, traits which permitted her to receive the angel's message that God's Son would be born as a human person, as one of us.

We are familiar with the story of the Annunciation, and it is fitting that we recall how God announced the birth of Jesus as we make our final preparations for our celebration of the Incarnation. The angel Gabriel visited Mary, a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph. Mary greeted the angel's news with awe and wonder and asked how it could be possible that she could give birth to a child. In his reply, the angel Gabriel announced the seemingly impossible reality: the child to be born would be conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and would be God's own Son. The angel reported to Mary another miracle; her relative Elizabeth was also pregnant despite having been thought to be unable to have a child. Mary's response to the angel, which is called her *fiat*, is an example of complete faith and obedience to God.

The story of the Annunciation calls to our attention God's wondrous action in human history. God chose a human person to give birth to his Son so that all humanity would know God's salvation. Mary, already full of God's grace, was able to cooperate in this great plan for our salvation. Thus Jesus was born as one of us, fully human and also fully divine. This is the mystery we prepare to celebrate at Christmas, the mystery of the Incarnation. In the model of Mary, we pray that we will be people of faith who recognize God's saving plan for us and are able to respond with obedience.

*Sunday Connection- Loyola Press*

## **A FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT REFLECTION ON PEACE THAT THE ANNUNCIATION BRINGS**

*Adapted from the reflections of Amanda Idleman*

The fourth Sunday of Advent we meditate on the peace that Jesus came to bring to our hearts and our world. Scripture is the place we can find the promises of peace in God. We focus our hearts on the “Lord of peace” who came down from heaven in the form of a baby. We also light up the fourth candle of Advent which is called the “Angel Candle” and symbolizes peace. This name comes from the fact that the angels announced that Jesus came to bring peace (Luke 2:14). Let us meditate on these truths and allow peace to comfort our hearts on this last Sunday of Advent!

2 Thessalonians 3:16 says, “Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.”

This year many of us had to face so much chaos and uncertainty. God’s peace is something we need to grab tightly onto more than ever. God knows that we are in a constant battle against fear! Fear wants to cripple us, to push us to react rather than carefully respond, and fear steals our joy. God has given us the gift of peace so we can live joy-filled lives.

This fourth Advent Sunday we are reminded that Jesus offers us peace in every season and nothing is impossible with him. Let us pray that God’s unexplainable peace would be evident in our hearts and home. May God’s spirit transform the day leading up to Christmas into a time to joyfully await our King

*Modified from the writings of Amanda Idleman*