

4th Sunday of Advent



The hope and peace of our Lord awaits us as we approach the fourth and final Sunday of Advent. We are also moving toward the winter holidays, which can be an unusually difficult time for those in recovery. Cultural expectations, heightened family tension, or a general sense of loss and loneliness may impact the way we feel and behave this time of year.

We have a chance to reflect upon the willingness of the Blessed Virgin Mary as we hear from the Gospel of Luke this Sunday. Mary's "yes" paved the way for Christ's entry into our world, revealing God's ultimate love for us and salvation from bondage. Prior to her invitation and call to take on such great responsibility, the angel Gabriel identifies the presence of God within her:

*"Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you."
But she was greatly troubled at what was said
and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.
Then the angel said to her,
"Do not be afraid, Mary,
for you have found favor with God.*

*"Behold, you will conceive in your womb
and bear a son,
and you shall name him Jesus.
He will be great and will be called
Son of the Most High,
and the Lord God will give him the throne
of David his father,
and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever,
and of his kingdom there will be no end."*

Like most of us when confronted with the magnificence of God's plan, Mary questions how this could possibly be true. Similar to what we find along the road of recovery, the angel promises that she will be supported by others along the way. In fact, her cousin, Elizabeth, has also experienced a miraculous spiritual experience, proving that nothing is impossible for God.

The Lord did not march into the world in a display of power and might, as many faithful Jews were expecting Him to. Rather, He was welcomed into the world by the grace of a humble woman:

*Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.
May it be done to me according to your word."*

When faced with this amazing proposition, our Lord's Mother responds with the peace and serenity that comes with being protected by God. As we stay active in our recovery from lust addiction and unhealthy sexual attachments, we will be faced with moments when God asks us to bring the hope of new life to others. This may not be convenient and we may not feel prepared, but He will provide us support and grace along the way. When necessary, He will send angels to remind us of our true identity as beloved sons of God.

Let us seek to pray alongside Mary as we proclaim the words, "May it be done to me according to Your word." The more we offer ourselves to the process of recovery, the more purpose we will find in our lives. When our recovery is overlapped with the sacramental life of our faith, we get to know Jesus in an intimate and personal way.

We may be inclined to share glad tidings with those we encounter in the coming days as we turn to God for inspiration and hope. We have been offered a priceless gift of peace and freedom and find joy in the experience of sharing it with others.

- What challenges, if any, are you experiencing as the holidays approach?
- What spiritual tools and solutions will help you remain at peace and open to the will of God this Christmas Season?
- What helps you know that you are loved and protected by God?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29

2nd Reading: Romans 16:25-27

Gospel: Luke 1:26-38