

# Holy Spirit Province

## PROVINCIAL NEWSLETTER

Date - 14 December 2020



---

### **SAYING 'YES' TO GOD: 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (B)**

- *What does giving or getting a Christmas present mean to you?*
- *What particular commitments is God asking you to renew this Christmas?*
- *Name some particular people for whom you might be the light of Christ this Christmas.*

A few days before Christmas last year, a woman received a beautiful string of pearls in the mail. She could only guess who sent the gift. But when she didn't find any message with the present she burst into tears. Three times she turned the packet upside down and inside out. But there was no note, no words, no message, wrapped up with the gift. What she really wanted was a card that said 'I love you!' That message would have meant more to her than the pearls themselves.

By contrast, when Gabriel, the messenger of God, greets Mary, the first things Mary hears are words of love: 'Rejoice, Mary! The Lord is with you. God loves you. You are special, you are precious. God has chosen you.' God doesn't leave out the important words.

On first hearing those words of God's special love for her, Mary is puzzled and perplexed. Here she is, a girl about fourteen years old, living quietly in an out-of-the-way village of Galilee, far from the rich and famous and the movers and shakers of this world, and yet hearing those amazing and stunning words from God! 'What is God up to?', 'What is God asking of me?' she wonders. Our gospel says: 'She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what the greeting could mean.'

The messenger of God reassures her: 'Don't be alarmed! Don't be afraid! Listen to what I have to say! Of all women on earth, God has chosen you to be the Mother of the Saviour of the World!' But Mary is a virgin and so she asks: 'But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?' God's messenger answers: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow.'

Mary doesn't need to ask any more questions. She simply responds freely and deliberately to the God of surprises, the God who has picked her out for the greatest mission in the world: 'I am the servant of the Lord,' she says, 'I say "yes" to God. I accept my part in God's plans. Let what you have said be done to me.' From that moment Mary conceives the child Jesus in her womb. From that moment 'the Word of God becomes a human being and dwells among us' (Jn1:14). St Augustine comments that Mary first conceives her child in her heart and only

then does she conceive him in her body. Our Preface today makes the beautiful observation: ‘The virgin mother longed for him with love beyond all telling’, i.e., with indescribable love.

You and I are living in an age when people are finding it particularly difficult to make permanent commitments to others, commitments that require life-long love, fidelity, perseverance and endurance. So, it is particularly appropriate for us to wonder and marvel at Mary’s total commitment to God, and her acceptance of all the changes her pregnancy will bring to her previous plans.

What a striking example she is, of living that life-motto ‘Let go and let God’! She teaches us to put our faith and trust in God at all times, but especially in difficult, demanding, and seemingly impossible situations. But, just as Mary set out immediately afterwards to bring our Saviour to her elderly cousin, Elizabeth, she also teaches us to be people who bring the light of Jesus the Christ to others.

During the past year, we have become aware of how much darkness there is in our world as well as how much light. In the rituals that we have watched on TV for the victims of bombings and of Covid-19, and for the thousands of people killed in hurricanes and floods in Vietnam and the Philippines, we notice that grieving people always light candles of remembrance. Those small pieces of self-consuming wax and flame are saying that the light in our world is stronger than the darkness. That’s the message too of the lighting of the four candles today on our Advent wreath. Those candles will burn out, but our commitment to being the Light of Christ in the surrounding darkness of insensitivity, indifference, ignorance and malice, should never be either put out or allowed to burn out.

During the rest of our Eucharist, then, let us renew our commitment to bring to others that Light of Christ that drives out the darkness of evil, and especially for those for whom Christmas tends to be a time of darkness, sadness, disappointment, depression and desperation, rather than a feast of light, love, joy and peace. I’m thinking particularly of people who are poor, sick, unemployed, hungry, homeless, separated, bereaved, friendless or abused. They especially need our commitment at this time to be for them the bright light and the warm love of Jesus Christ.

[bgleesoncp@gmail.com](mailto:bgleesoncp@gmail.com)