

4th Sunday of Advent

Homily Given by: Deacon James Windon

December 20, 2020 (10AM Sunday Mass)

(2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8B-12, 14A, 16) (Romans 16:25-27) (Luke 1: 26-38)

Good morning my sisters and my brothers. The fourth Sunday of Advent and our preparation is almost over for the coming of our Savior. Let us all take a break from our planning, our lists, and our tasks, to truly reflect on our Gospel today. Our fourth Advent candle is lit today and represents peace. Today, I want to explore the miracle of choice and the peace that comes with it.

Today, more than ever, the statement, “God does not call the qualified; God qualifies the called” is defined. The Apostle Luke relates to us the Annunciation of Mary and the miracle of choices. Our first choice to recognize here is that God chose us to be His people...all of us. Throughout history, God affirms this choice by choosing unlikely people and using them to guide His people back to grace. Most of us know how the great men in the Old Testament, like Moses and David, were chosen by God when they were but lowly, shunned men. Today, God fulfills a promise made over a thousand years prior to this moment. Today, God chooses Mary to be the Mother of Jesus, our eternal savior. Who was Mary?

It is believed that Mary was a 12-14 year-old girl, living in Nazareth. Mary is betrothed to Joseph, who is believed to be older than her. This, as was the custom, was probably a marriage arranged by the parents of Mary and Joseph. Mary is a young girl, living in Nazareth, with no status, no wealth, and no experience. This is whom God chose to be the Mother of God.

God sends His angel Gabriel to Mary to announce His choice. When the angel greets her, the Gospel tells us that she was “troubled”. Troubled? Did this girl have nerves of steel?! An angel appears and she is only troubled? Could this be that because her deep faith and her state of grace allowed her to recognize this messenger of God? Probably.... Then, she hears those wonderful words that always bring us comfort when coming from God: “Do not be afraid.”

Then Gabriel tells her that she is going to bear a son, whom God names Jesus, who will rule forever. Mary picks out the biggest problem to this announcement...the one she can directly understand. She asks how this can be since she has had no relations with a man. Mary questions, possibly because Mary feels unworthy and that this must be a mistake! Gabriel tells her that the Holy Spirit will come upon her and the power of the Most High will overshadow her. Gabriel further offers a sign that she can also understand – that with God, nothing is impossible.

Gabriel then tells her about the pregnancy of Elizabeth. Place yourself in this moment, if you can. Your life is planned out for you. You are an accepted member of the community. If you say yes...if you choose to do this...everything changes. You could become an immediate, social outcast. You could lose your husband, your security, and destroy the lives of your parents. Mary chooses God. Mary says yes and in that moment, the miracle of choice changes

the fate of the world...before, then, now and every tomorrow. God's understanding of humanity protects Mary beyond this moment. After this encounter, if any doubt should attack Mary, she can comfort herself in the fact that God has left her a sign – proof – that this is real. She has but to follow the miraculous pregnancy of Elizabeth and the birth of her son to be continuously reminded that this is real.

What happens now? Well, just like us during Advent, she waits. She has nine months to prepare for the birth of Jesus. Mary must be filled with wonderment, excitement, and many hours of prayer during this preparation time. Thinking of this gives me a new appreciation for the Advent season. Because of this miraculous choice, Mary is transformed into the first disciple of Jesus Christ and a model of faith for all of us to follow. God chose, Mary chose, and these choices begin the greatest miracle for all of humanity. Choices matter.

Now, my sisters and my brothers, it is our turn to choose. God chose to create us with the ability to choose. God has chosen you and continues to choose you every day. From the moment of your conception until now, you are a benefactor of these miraculous choices. Have you made a choice? If you have, are you at peace with your choice or are you struggling with that choice? If you haven't, what are you waiting for?! God is calling you, but the evil in the world is competing with God, also constantly calling you, attempting to stop your choice.

Gods seeks servants, the world seeks slaves. Think about that. A servant has an element of freedom in choosing whom they work for, what they do, and are usually paid. A slave is owned, losing all rights, all choice, and all compensation. A servant can find peace, a slave is denied peace. We are weighed down by slavery if we remain beneath the yoke of sin, but can be set free by choosing the gift of salvation brought to us by Christ...yet another reason to choose God.

Let us look to Mary on how to make our choice, based on trust and faith. When we do, we will find that God has left us proof, just as He did with Mary. At every Mass, we are invited to witness the miracle of the Eucharist, right here, in our church, at this altar. This is what we need to bolster our faith in order to shield us from the doubts of the world.

My sisters and my brothers, we have 5 days left in this Advent season. Let us spend that time preparing the manger in our heart for the Baby Jesus. Let us accept the choice of God in our life, as Mary did, and choose God, as Mary did. Let us re-commit ourselves to this choice every day. That is how we can make this fourth Sunday of Advent truly about peace. Choices matter.

May God bless each and every one of you.

(See Gospel Reading Below)

Gospel: (LK 1: 26-38)

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "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."

But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God."

Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your Word." Then the angel departed from her.