

**The Annunciation
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Luke 1:26-38
December 19-20, 2020**

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

Today we start the fourth week of Advent. We light the final purple candle to mark the final week of prayer and penance as we wait for the birth of our Saviour.

This final candle, or the "Angel's Candle," symbolizes peace, and it reminds us of the message of the angels: "Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men."

So on this last Sunday of Advent, the Church invites us to open our consciences and our hearts to the great event that is coming, and invites us to live it with faith and love.

Today, we heard in the first reading that David had decided to build a temple to the Lord, but God, as always, has his own plans and, through the prophet Nathan, told him that God himself would establish his dwelling in the midst of his people.

And we heard that God promised David something else - that from his descendants the Messiah will be born who will reign forever, and his kingdom will have no end.

Brothers and sisters, God's initiative always triumphs. God frustrates the plans of men and often exceeds their expectations. And the promise that we heard finally became a reality. God became a living presence in Jesus, son of David, through the Virgin Mary.

Brothers and Sisters, today we are at the very door of Christmas, and Mary is shown to us as a model to receive Christ.

We heard in the Gospel the angel's greeting to Mary - words that have been repeated in the daily prayers of Christians for generations and generations:

"Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you".

And just hearing these words, the heart of Mary rejoiced with an indescribable happiness for having been chosen by God.

There was also a mix of feelings -fear, surprise, curiosity. So she responds to the angel by asking what kind of greeting this was ... But the angel calmed her down saying:

“Do not be afraid, ... you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus”

and Mary responded to the angel with the most remarkable phrase, a phrase that none of us must never forget: “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word.”

Brothers and Sisters, God preserved her from the stain of original sin, and she, a virgin, conceived the son of God.

From the moment Mary answered with such a beautiful and joyful: "Yes", she became the Mother of the Son of God, the mother of the Redeemer, the mother of our savior, who came to this world to free us from sin, from the slavery of death and from the devil's traps.

Brothers and Sisters, this is the deepest mystery of our faith, God through Mary joined in our human destiny as a man, just as you and me, and he became a man to open the way of salvation for us.

And this whole event reminds us of Isaiah's prophecy.

"Look: the virgin is pregnant and gives birth to a son, and she will name him Emmanuel" (Is 7:14).

Brothers and Sisters, this ancient promise found superabundant fulfillment in the Incarnation of the Son of God.

Mary did not know what path she would have to follow, what pain she would have to suffer, what risks she would have to face, but even so, in the face of all this, she said:

“Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word.”

She was fully aware that it was the Lord who was asking her for something, and not just anything, but something really important, the birth of his only son Jesus. And she fully trusted the angel's words and totally abandoned herself to her love. This was the faith of Mary.

Brothers and Sisters, each of us is called to respond, as Mary did, with a personal and sincere "yes", placing ourselves fully at the disposal of God, of his mercy, and of his love....

Amen