

Homily  
4AdventB  
Dec. 20, 2014  
St. Bernard Church

Today's Gospel

Highlights the role of Mary in God's plan of salvation

God could have put Jesus on a mountain in Israel and chosen any age for Jesus that He wanted

He didn't

He chose a woman, Mary, to bring Jesus into the world as an infant.

A reflection of the dignity of women

God's plan for the salvation of humanity depended on Mary's response to the angel's message

What if Mary had said "No.?"

She didn't say no. She said yes. "May it be done unto me."

Not only did Mary give birth to the Savior of humanity, but she became the most powerful human being, other than Jesus, to ever walk the face of the earth.

This little Jewish girl, from an obscure, tiny village in Israel is still playing a huge role in the cosmic battle between good and evil.

I want to explore what we can learn from the method God chose to bring Jesus into the world. This process serves as a model even for us "ordinary" humans.

How is this so?

Well, Jesus was a miracle, and every child, every human being, born of a woman is also a miracle, not the Son of God, but still a miracle.

Jesus says, in Matthew 18: "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me."

So every child received in the name of Jesus bears the presence of Jesus in them.

Every person born, every person in this church, every one of you, has certain talents and abilities, some of which come naturally and others which are developed through hard work and effort.

These talents and abilities, through Baptism, become available to the Body of Christ. They build up the kingdom of God on earth.

St. Paul says in the Letter to the Ephesians that the “full stature” of Christ is gradually being built up on earth by the talents and gifts of those who are members of the Body of Christ. We don’t have the “spiritual” eyes to see this, but it is happening right under our noses, mysteriously.

So, amazingly, the lives, the talents and gifts of each of us, are playing a part in the salvation of humanity, like the talents and gifts of Jesus himself did. We are not Jesus, we don’t share His identity, but through Baptism and our faithfulness on earth we become united with Jesus in the salvation of others. He used Mary. He uses us. All of us.

Here then, are some questions raised by all this:

“Why were you, and I mean each of you, created?”

“What are the gifts and talents you have that were given to you to build up the Body of Christ on earth?”

“How are you using those gifts and talents?”

“Do you have a sense of purpose, an awareness that God put you here to do something specific for the good of humanity, to do something concrete to help other human beings obtain their salvation?”

You know, the commandment to go to church on Sunday was not made to complicate your weekend. It’s because the Body of Christ needs you, all of you, all of your gifts, to function at maximum effectiveness in the world. If you’re not here, the Body of Christ is missing something that it needs. That’s why you should be here.

St. Paul, again in the Letter to the Ephesians, states that you are “members of the household of God” and that, through Christ, “the whole structure is held together and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord; in Christ you are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Holy Spirit.”

We’re like the pieces in a giant puzzle. The Holy Spirit takes the gifts of each one of us and connects them with the gifts of other people to accomplish God’s plan.

This is why, when the gifts are brought up on the altar, the gifts that represent our lives, we ask the Holy Spirit to come upon these gifts and make them into the Body and Blood of Jesus.

As each of us prepares for Christmas and for a New Year, I offer this prayer:

Lord, Jesus, I thank you for the gift of my life. I thank you that, through my Baptism, you have entrusted me with a noble and most important purpose: to use my gifts and talents to build up the Body of Christ on earth, to bring myself and others to salvation. Help me, Lord, to have a sense of purpose, to know Your will for my life and to have the strength and courage to live out the plan You have put in place for me. I can only do this, Lord, through the grace that You make available for me.

So please, Lord, come into my life this Christmas and this New Year with more power, more grace. Draw me closer to You than I have ever been before. Help me to be like Mary, Lord, to say "Yes, Jesus. I am yours. May it be done unto me as You have said."