

## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent – Cycle B – 12/23 & 12/24/17

### ***“Preparing Ourselves as a Place for God to Dwell”***

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8B-12, 14A, 16

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

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

Every year, for the past dozen years or so, we have hosted Thanksgiving at our modestly sized ranch style home for both my family and Tara’s family. With all of the kids getting older and some of our nieces and nephews marrying, the number of people keeps growing, which is a blessing but also a challenge. And every year we say we are going to keep our house organized enough so that the preparation for Thanksgiving isn’t so daunting or taxing. But, life happens and regardless of the circumstances we still spend several days preparing for the event. We prepare the house, ourselves and several turkeys for the mere hour of eating that Thanksgiving dinner entails. We then spend many more hours cleaning up afterward, with a lot of help from family of course. The next day, we typically transform the house once again, this time from a banquet facility to Christmas town: a house filled with reminders of Christmas’ past and of the Christmas to come as we begin decorating for the Advent Season.

The preparation of our homes, in whatever way it happens, usually anticipates and mirrors the preparation that is supposed to take place in our lives. During Advent for example, the decorations, the trees, the lights, the stockings, the candles, and the crèche are all to help us enter into and prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ and the Christmas season. *THIS* preparation however, is also to help us realize that Christ the Son dwells within us, along with the Father and Holy Spirit year-round, even after the guests have gone and decorations of the Christmas season are put away. God’s plan from the very beginning was for us to be a dwelling place in which to host Him here on earth, that is why we were created, it is what we receive in Baptism and one of the ways we share in the divine life. Our challenge is to make sure that the dwelling place of God within each one of us is maintained and kept worthy of His presence.

We see this explicitly in our Gospel from Luke. God, by means of the Angel Gabriel, comes to Mary and quite directly says that He is coming to dwell within her in the form of a human child. Mary is going to be hosting Almighty God, literally, in her body and in her home as the Mother of God. Mary's preparation began at the very moment God created her in her Immaculate Conception, without sin, exactly so she could be the proper dwelling and vessel for the incarnation of God. However, Mary still had to prepare herself, she still had to try to make sense of all of this and most importantly she still had to accept the invitation and all it entailed: she still had to say "yes".

The preparation of this event however, began long before Mary's Immaculate Conception, and was prophesied in our first reading from Samuel. King David, in a time of peace laments the Ark of the Covenant, the Holy of Holies that is the presence of God on earth, resting in a modest and less than permanent tent. God should have a better, more fitting home than a tent, David figures. And David is committed to building just that, in thanksgiving, reverence and as a sign of loyalty to God. God's response however is not what David or Nathan the prophet expects. God is the one who is in charge and the one who creates, makes, builds, determines and prepares a permanent place for His people as well as *HIS OWN* dwelling place, not the other way around.

God establishes His dwelling here on earth within each one of us and has been since our creation and in doing so fulfills His promise of salvation for all. He does all of this out of His Love and Mercy, "*My kindness is established forever*" we hear in our Responsorial Psalm. How well do we prepare or have we prepared ourselves to accept and welcome Him?

Advent in particular is the season of preparation in the Church for the coming of Christ into the world to fulfill the plans of the Father since the beginning of time. This year, that time of preparation has been cut short due to the way the dates fall; Christmas is just hours away and we have to ask ourselves: Are we ready? Are we ready to allow God into our lives and to make a suitable dwelling place within each and every one of us? It's a tough question. We never feel truly ready; we always wish we had more time to prepare. I wish, like I do with our house as Thanksgiving approaches, that I did a better job keeping my life better maintained. But like I

mentioned, sometimes life happens and things get away from us. Unlike Mother Mary, we are not immaculate, *BUT*, like Mary it is up to us to say “yes” and to allow God to dwell within us. And like David, we sometimes need to get out of the way to allow God to do the work he promised to do.

So as we finish the preparation that is underway this Advent season, let’s begin or continue the preparation of ourselves for Christ and continue it year round. We can begin by preparing ourselves here and now to welcome Christ in the dwelling of ourselves through the Eucharist we are about to receive. Knowing that God dwells in us materially in the Eucharist we receive, can be a great start to put the house of God in each of us in order. Preparation is the key. If we prepare well and constantly, it will be easier to welcome Him and His Abiding Presence throughout every season and every event in our lives.