

St Patrick's Cathedral Parish, Parramatta

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December 24

Fourth Sunday of Advent - Year B

From the Dean's Desk

Dear Friends,

How would you react if in a dream, God made you aware of the remaining years and events of your life – the good, the not so good, the explainable and the inexplicable? How would you respond to God? Would you say to God: *'Let's talk this over and sort out some of those perplexing elements of life that you are suggesting? I'm not too sure about all those difficult situations you are intending to place in my path in the future.'* This could certainly be one way of responding to such an experience.

Or would your response be: *'Look, Lord, I can't really understand why you have planned these difficult moments in my life – why you have mingled the good with the surprising, but let's face it, you are God and at least I trust that you know what is best for me and that you will be there to help me!'*

Our response to such a scenario could be one of two. Either: 'Your will be **done**' or 'Your will be **changed**'. Today's Gospel gives us an indication as to what our response should be. When we consider today's Gospel passage [Luke 1:26-38] – Luke's story of the Annunciation to Mary of the birth of Jesus, we can be excused in thinking it a pleasant and easy experience for Mary. This is the impression we may receive from some of the art depicting the Annunciation. Mary is at prayer, the angel Gabriel is near her looking mysterious and resplendent, giving her the announcement of God's intention for her. Mary seems to be in a very responsive and accepting pose, ready to accept whatever God is asking of her. This is more than just a personal visit by one of God's messengers to Mary. It is, for Mary, the turning point of her life and the beginning of a very exclusive and challenging vocation.

Let us consider what is happening at this scene. Mary is going about her daily tasks, oblivious of what was about to occur. The archangel Gabriel appears to her with a message from



God. From that moment on Mary's life was changed forever in a drastically new and surprising way. Mary, betrothed to Joseph was at the threshold of a new life. Her plans were arranged and settled. She knew where she was going and what life had intended for her. But God saw it otherwise. Mary's response to Gabriel's news shows us that she was quite shaken. Luke tells us that she was disturbed by the message. But after listening to Gabriel's elaboration of the news – the fact that the Holy Spirit would overshadow her and that her Child would bring about the salvation of mankind – she obediently surrendered to God's will by simply saying: ***'I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me'*** [Luke 1:38].

On this final Sunday of Advent, we are purposefully left with the figure of Mary. She represents the true and faithful disciple of the Lord. Mary was obedient and open to God's will throughout her life. She not only brought the Word of God into our human story but she nurtured and formed him, accompanied him in his public ministry; was there at his Crucifixion; and present with the new born Church at Pentecost. All this was possible because of the fact that she said 'yes' to Gabriel's request from God.

This is not an isolated story, but one that is played out in our lives on a daily basis. We need to have the spiritual insight to be able to receive God's word and respond to it in faith and hope, as Mary did. She challenges us to see that in everyday life the same can happen to us: God can enter into our lives and ask of us something which we may not understand or comprehend. If our faith and trust in God's ways is strong, then like Mary, we too can say: I am the servant of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me.

Fr Bob Bossini,
Dean & Parish Priest