

Homily. 4th Sunday in Advent. Year. B. 23/24 December 2023.

Over the past 2 weekends I've spoken to you about John the Baptist, and last weekend about the connection between John, his mother Elizabeth and Mary as members of Jesus extended family group. Tonight/today, with less than 24 hours before our Christmas celebrations begin, we finally get to hear the story of the Angel Gabriel's Annunciation to Mary, of her disturbance and uncertainties about the message and of her ultimate free yes to cooperate with God's plan for her and for God's people.

Last weekend I mentioned that what stands out about Mary's response, making her special, was her attentiveness to God and to God's word and her responsiveness to what God proposed. She laid aside her own plans and control over her life choosing instead to trust in God's plan for her and for humanity. This she then lived out in all of the joys and happiness as well as the sorrows and pains for the rest of her days. In Mary's response fears are faced and overcome by her faith that God who blessed her and she trusted would not fail her.

It's faith like this which gives us hope. This hope in turn frees us from our selfishness so that we can love and choose to do the loving thing, even for our enemies and without counting the cost or demanding a reward. Christ's birth and our Christmas feast is always about the beginning of a hope that never runs dry or fails. From the gift of God's love for us and our faith in it, joy flows into our hearts. May we all, a little like Mary, say our yes again and again to God who builds a home amongst us, the eternal Lord of life and God with us now, today, tomorrow and always.