

Listening With The Heart

In the Gospel Reading for this Sunday, Luke and the Church are telling not the externals of the Advent narrative but the inside of it. "May it be done unto me according to your word," Mary says. Why? Her "inside story" is dramatically significant to the whole human race, and her words issue from the center of who she is.

There is a parallel Annunciation account in Luke (Lk 1:18-25), hinted at by the the angel's annunciation to Mary.

In other words, Gabriel makes two Annunciations, one right after the other, not just the one. Each is about a child to be born. But, interestingly, as things stood, neither one was feasible. Elizabeth was barren, so she could not have a child.

Mary had no husband and she had never had conjugal relations.

But after the Annunciation to him, Zechariah is struck deaf and mute, while Mary, initially fearful, accepts peacefully. Compare the two:

Zechariah: "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years."

Mary: "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?"

Ponder these responses for a moment.

1. Zechariah's reply, while realistic, is insulting. He is saying to the angel, "give me some reason to believe what you are saying. Just to hear you say it is not enough."

This kind of doubt should never have occurred to him. God's voice had already spoken love into his heart throughout his whole life (like to David in the First Reading). His trust in God's promise should have been the deepest meaning of his existence. In this sense, Zechariah was already deaf and mute when the Angel spoke to him! He could not receive the words (so was deaf), and therefore would not be able to tell his wife, Elizabeth (so was mute).

2. Mary on the other hand simply asks for clarification. She seemed to know already that "nothing is impossible to God." Just tell me how this is going to happen and I will gladly do it.

Looking at both annunciations gives an insight, too often hidden from us. It helps us immensely to understand Mary's "inside story": how she listened with her heart.

How much do you and I listen to the voice of God's promise, which is written in our hearts too, if we let it be.

Do our own words just spout out of us without reference to that unwavering love deep within? If so, we may be like Zechariah: hard of hearing when it comes to the needs and beauties of those around us, and speechless when a word of love would make all the difference.

Let us ask humbly in these last few days of Advent for the grace to listen and to hear. The one who promised will not fail.

John Foley, SJ

Fourth Sunday of Advent December 20, 2020

St. Stephens Indian Mission

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Sacrament of Reconciliation & Sacrament of the Sick

You may call the office to schedule an appointment for confession. If there is no answer please leave your name and phone number and Father Jim will return your call. Please do not schedule an appointment if you are sick, please wait until you are well to protect yourself and the priest. Priest and penitent will be required to wear a mask and maintain a safe six foot distance during confession.

The Sacrament of the sick is available for those who are in need, terminal and to those who have an upcoming surgery. Please call the office if you or a loved one is in need of this sacrament.

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Come in seeking; come in wondering; come in hurting. Come into this house of companionship and compassion. Come in. You are welcome here. Our faith Family opens its doors to you and in the name of Christ, bids you Welcome!
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The purpose of St. Stephen's Indian Mission, the presence of the Roman Catholic Church among the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho, is to grow into a strong community of believers, sharing our lives in the Holy Spirit, forming one welcoming People of God, who are committed to Jesus Christ, His gospel and mission.

Readings December 21st through December 27th :

Mon: Sg 2:18-24; Ps 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21; Lk 1:39-45
 Tue: 1 Sm 1:24-28; (Ps) 1Sm 2:1, 4-7, 8abcd; Lk 1:46-56
 Wed: Mal 3:1-4, 23-24; Ps 25:4bc-5ab, 8-10, 14; Lk 1:57-66
 Thur: Is 62:1-5; Ps 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29; Acts 13:16-17, 22-25; Mt 1:1-25
 Fri: Is 52:7-10; Ps 98:1-6; Heb 1:1-6; Jn 1:1-18
 Sat: Acts 6:8-10, 7:54-59; Ps 31:3cd-4, 6-8b, 16bc, 17; Mt 10:17-22
 Sun: Sir 3:2-6, 12-14; Ps 128:1-5; Col 3:12-21; Lk 2:22-40

Parish Collection

Last week mail in collection \$2555
"Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." Corinthians 9:7

THANK YOU to all who have continued to make financial contributions to St. Stephens Indian Mission through these most trying times! God Bless!

Mass Intentions this week

12/20: Sunday	Russ Millar
Sunday	For the people
12/23: Wednesday 5pm	Judy Hoyt
12/24: Thursday	Niibe Prue +Larry Englert, +Joe Malek
12/25: Friday	For the people, Special intention, +Gene Goggles
12/26: Saturday 9am	+Richard Leigh
12/27: Sunday	For the people
Sunday	+Roger Montoya

As we continue to celebrate Mass at St. Stephens, we are limited to 10 people in attendance as we follow the Wind River Intertribal Council's resolution. If you would like to be added to the rotating list of parishioners for Mass please call the office or email the parish office. Please also email the parish office (melissa.brown@saintstephensmission.com) to make sure your contact information is on file with the Parish as this is our primary way to contact you when things change or if we have an event you might be interested in. Thank you!

Please remember that Bishop Steven's general dispensation from the Sunday Mass obligation will remain in effect for the duration of Mass attendance restrictions. Mass is available for viewing on K2 Television at 9am and/or you may watch via livestream on St. Margaret's or Holy Rosary's FB pages.

Face masks are required at Mass. Please use hand sanitizer, refrain from exchanging handshakes during the Sign of Peace and maintain at least six feet apart from parishioners (except if you are in the same household) including processing to receive the Eucharist. If you are not feeling well and are scheduled to attend Mass please stay home and call the office so we can switch you with another parishioner until you feel well. Please keep our church family safe. We appreciate your cooperation as we move forward, safely, together.

Please pray for the family of the deceased:

+June Shakespeare

+Cedric Shakespeare, Sr.

Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their soul and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

Having Mass offered for an anniversary, marriage, special occasion, or in memory of someone is a special gift. Cards are available at the office.

Diocesan guideline is \$10.00 for Mass.

Today is the Fourth Sunday of Advent! There are many guides online for prayer during the Advent season. Find one that is good for your family!

Nominations for Parish Council are being accepted! You may either call Fr. Jim or mail us your nomination or nominate yourself! Please prayerfully consider serving in this capacity.

So our parishioners may plan as they need: There will NOT be a communal penance service this Advent. You may call the office and leave a message if you would like to schedule an appointment for confession.



Poinsettias

If you would like to donate poinsettias for the church please bring them to the parish office or leave in the church by December 22nd. Thank you and God Bless!

Praised be Jesus Christ!

Praise Him now and always!