



Bringing Home the Word

Fourth Sunday of Advent (B)
December 20, 2020

Extreme Makeover: Home Edition

By Fr. Mark Haydu

King David wants to build God a home! He had first built his own palace and afterward realized that he hadn't built a space for God—a place of worship and family communion.

It is admirable that David wants to give back, but do we have to take care of God or, rather, is it God who cares for us? Obviously, God doesn't need David to build him a house. The whole world is his. Didn't God build up David all along, bringing him to a place where he might consider offering God something in return? It is like children who want to

give their parents a gift. First, they ask a parent for money or a gift idea. On their own, they cannot give.

God turns the tables on David, saying God will build David a house—an everlasting lineage to rule over the people. God will build something much bigger than anything David had ever dreamt of. He will build David a kingdom that will become a nation and give birth to a worldwide universal Church.

In the painting, *The Annunciation with City by the Sea* by Marco Palmezzano, Mary stands in front of an ornate house. She stands like us, at the entrance, welcoming God's coming. It was her yes that allowed the master builder to enter into our world to begin building this house, which became a Church.

Like Mary, we await Jesus. With her, let us say yes to him, celebrating the one who has established that house where we celebrate today!

***God turns the tables,
saying God will build
David a house—
an everlasting lineage
to rule over the people.***

Sunday Readings

2 Samuel 7:1–5, 8b–12, 14a, 16

The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you.

Romans 16:25–27

Now to him who can strengthen you... through Jesus Christ be glory forever and ever.

Luke 1:26–38

Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."

A Word from Pope Francis

The angel Gabriel calls Mary "full of grace": in her there is no room for sin, because God chose her from eternity to be the mother of Jesus and preserved her from original sin... We too are asked to listen to God who speaks to us, and to accept his will... The Lord is always speaking to us!

—Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 2014



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Is giving myself to God in prayer a way to let him accomplish his dreams for me?
- How can I offer hospitality to others so they can encounter God's love?

An Exhibit of Wonder and Love

By Johan van Parys

Growing up I attended midnight Mass on Christmas with my family. I insisted on arriving early because I didn't want to miss the moment before the beginning of the Mass when the sacristan carried the Baby Jesus into the church and placed him in the manger. He was an elderly man who had worked for the church his entire life. He walked with great difficulty and could barely make it down the steps of the sanctuary. Yet, he held the plaster image of Jesus in his arms with such tenderness and reverence he might as well have been carrying a real baby. He knew this image represented the Savior of the world.

As a teenager, I quickly lost interest in the Baby Jesus. I was too *cool* to fuss about any baby, let alone a plaster one. As a student at Notre Dame, I thought it theologically unsophisticated to pay much attention to Christmas beyond the reality of the Incarnation celebrated on that day. I had little patience for the obsession of people for Christmas trees and Nativity scenes. I wondered if they really understood the meaning of Christmas.

But my outlook on Christmas completely changed when I was given a small Nativity set from Burkina Faso, a country in West Africa. It was carved in local wood by a Christian villager. Although the figures were rather primitive, one could clearly see that the artist had carved the Holy Family in the



image of the people of his village. I loved it so much that this first Nativity set became the start of a large collection of Nativities from all around the world, all of which are in the image of the people who created them.

Each year, I carefully unwrap close to 400 Nativity sets. I do this deliberately, thinking of the people who carved each set in his or her own image. As I gently place the Baby Jesus in the manger, set after set, I also think of the old man in my home church from so many years ago and the woman in our church today who carries the Baby Jesus to the Nativity scene with such love and reverence.

In a simple yet poignant way, these many Nativity sets with their varied

features and skin tones and the way we treat them underline the essence of the Incarnation. The artist and beholder alike know that, though very different from us, Jesus became like all of us. Through Jesus, no matter who we are, we are all able to encounter God in a real and tangible way. The Nativity scenes and the rituals around them symbolize and affirm this wondrous reality.

Nativity scenes help symbolize the reality that, through Jesus, we're able to encounter God in a tangible way.

Indeed, this encounter with God in Jesus Christ is not a mere theological exercise or pietistic drivel. Rather, it's a great reality. We celebrate that he took on our image and became like us so we might take on his image and become like him. +

PRAYER

Lord, you have called us to be your instruments of peace and reconciliation in the world. Give me the courage to make peace with those who have hurt me and caused me pain.

—From *Joyful Meditations for Every Day of Advent and the 12 Days of Christmas*,
Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

December 21–26

Monday, Advent Weekday: Sg 2:8–14
or Zep 3:14–18a / Lk 1:39–45


Tuesday, Advent Weekday:
1 Sm 1:24–28 / Lk 1:46–56

Wednesday, Advent Weekday:
Mal 3:1–4, 23–24 / Lk 1:57–66

Thursday, Advent Weekday:
2 Sm 7:1–5, 8b–12, 14a, 16 / Lk 1:67–79

Friday, Christmas: Is 52:7–10 /
Heb 1:1–6 / Jn 1:1–18 or Jn 1:1–5, 9–14

Saturday, St. Stephen:
Acts 6:8–10, 7:54–59 / Mt 10:17–22

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