

# Commentary on Sunday Scripture – Year B

## Fourth Sunday of Advent

### **First reading:**

(2 Samuel 7.1-5, 8-11, 16)

*A King for Ever*

At the height of his powers, King David wants to thank God for his lavish favours by building him a house. No human being patronizes God, and David was not allowed to build the Temple. But God replies with the promise that he will build David a House. The dynasty lasted for a couple of centuries.

In one sense, David's House crashed into ruins when the last king of Judah was blinded and taken off into exile in Babylon. But the promise of an eternal kingship still inspired and encouraged the Jews in their Exile in Babylon. David's line still stands, not as a house built with human hands but as a House built by God. It is fulfilled in the eternal kingship of the Son of David who is also Mary's Son, and this fulfilment begins at the Annunciation.

This is why so many phrases from the prophet Nathan's promise are echoed in the annunciation of the angel to Mary. 'Your sovereignty will always stand secure before me and your throne be established for ever', says Nathan. 'He will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end', says the angel. Despite his faults, David remains the model of kingship in Israel.

### **Question:**

What does Jesus' title as Son of David convey to you?

### **Second reading:**

(Romans 16.25-27)

*The Last Secret*

This reading gives the final cry of excitement and triumph at the end of Paul's great letter to the Christians of Rome. His task is to reveal to the nations (not just to the Jews) God's secret plan, which has been brewing all through human history and now comes to its climax in Christ.

This is the 'mystery' that God has finally revealed in Christ, for a 'mystery' is a sacred reality revealed only at the end of time. God has offered his friendship and his divine wisdom in Christ. Human beings respond with the 'obedience of faith', a keyword of the letter: we need only trust God's promises for all our weakness to be buried under God's glory. All we need do in this obedience of faith is to hang on to God's promises by our fingertips in our acceptance of God's promised help.

Our celebration of Christmas is not just of a baby born at Bethlehem. It is of the climax of God's design for the world, the keystone of history. So we do not simply look back on it as a great event. Christians must see it as the anchor of God's design for the whole of history and for the course of each day.

### **Question:**

Is faith a matter of knowledge or of something else?

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## **Gospel:**

*(Luke 1.26-38)*

### *The Annunciation*

As we prepare for the birth of Jesus, the final Sunday of Advent always focuses on Mary.

What was the young girl Mary doing when the message came? Kneeling piously? Feeding the sheep? Fetching water? Sweeping the mud floor? What was she thinking? Engaged to be married, surely thinking about her approaching wedding to Joseph and about the children she would mother.

Then came the message that she could accept or refuse, the message on which hung the future of the world: her child would be different from all others. How 'different'? Her thoughts were turned back to the promise of David. It had been read to her so often in the Bible, and now the words were drummed into her mind, "his reign will have no end".

This would all be the work of the Spirit that she had so often heard read out in Isaiah: "the Holy Spirit will come upon you", the Spirit that was to come upon the Servant of the Lord, the Spirit of Emmanuel, 'God with us'. Her young body was to grow, nourish and develop this child. Then she would have the child in her arms to cherish and shape as both Son of God and her own son

## **Question:**

How is the Immaculate Conception related to Mary's motherhood?

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