

December 24, 2017 - Last Sunday of Advent

This is the last Sunday of Advent for our parish. Christmas Day will start at 2:00 this afternoon. So, if you have been wishing me a Merry Christmas and I haven't said anything; I'm waiting until 2:00 when it's Christmas. I'm not being rude, I'm just separating my day. When I go home from this Mass, I'm changing into my leisure wear for about 2 ½ hours, then I'll get dressed again to pretend it's a new day, so that I can continue again with the two and the four. From what I hear, everybody is going to the 2:00 except a few people. How many are going to the 2:00? Okay, how many are going to the 4:00? How many going to the 10:00? How many are leaving town? How many are not participating? Half.

Five-year-old Olivia and her friend Claire were in the Christmas play at school. Catholic School, of course. Claire was playing Mary, Olivia was playing an angel. Before the show, another young boy in the play went around and he asked everybody, "what are you?" they would answer politely because he would say, "I'm a sheep." So, he goes to Olivia and says, "what are you?" She says, "I'm an angel." Oh, then he goes to Claire and he says, "Claire, what are you?" Claire is still getting dressed with her mother and she says, "I'm Mary." The little boy, realizing he was in the presence of a star, a major player in the play, tried to adjust himself and was as serious as a five-year-old actor can be. He said, "well, I'm going to be a sheep and you know, being a sheep is hard you know." Claire looked at him and said, "yes, but being a virgin is hard too."

In our first reading we start seeing one of God's provident trails through history begin. God works in very subtle ways. Sometimes it takes centuries, but we all wait. And when we wait, what do we call that? We call it advent. Waiting for someone or something to happen. We're living in an advent. In our first reading, it takes place a thousand years before Jesus. King David has taken the throne. He has the palace built. Previous twenty years, David was fighting and killing. He was involved in wars, insurrections, putting down people trying to come in and take over Israel. And he was involved in unifying all twelve tribes into one kingdom. Previously there were two. He has got a lot of blood in his background. He is sitting there, as we see in our first reading, thinking; you know what, I have this beautiful cedar palace, I have this beautiful throne, and there is God, in the Ark of the Covenant dwelling in a tent. The same tent that was used for hundreds of years since the exodus from Egypt. "I think that I should build a house for God." He calls the prophet, Nathan, we see Nathan for the first time. He says, "Nathan, do you think it would be alright with God if I build Him a house?" Nathan of course, knows how successful David's been, how God has favored him, and he just says off the top of his head, "sure, build God a house and you'll be blessed." That night Nathan goes home, and God appears to him. "No, you were wrong, David is not to build me a house, I will build a house for David." What he's saying is, grace has a primacy, grace has a special way, it comes from God down to us, not from us to God. We get our grace directly from God and God is telling David through Nathan, "I will build you the house, you will not build me a house." And so, He makes an extravagant promise. "I will raise up from your line, an heir not only to build me a house, but, his kingdom will last forever and his throne will be forever." This is the most extravagant promise in the bible. A tremendous promise; to say somethings going to last forever. What God is saying is a covenant. A covenant is between two people, and the terms are; you will fulfill your part of the covenant and if you don't, you get killed. Kind of like the mob. So, God makes this covenant. Well, both parties have to agree to it till one of them dies, or both. In this situation, God doesn't die, so the covenant lasts forever. So, he says that somebody is going to build a house for me in your lineage. That person is David's son. We call him Solomon, but that wasn't his birth name. We call him Solomon, and Solomon means peace. It comes from shalom. Peace. Because Solomon is going to reign over the

kingdom of Israel all his life. There will be no wars; not going to be any need for violence, so he is not going to have blood on his hands. He will build the most magnificent temple for God, that has ever been built. When it was destroyed by Iran, they couldn't equal it. So that is going to happen. So, David dies in peace, knowing that his line will continue. Solomon does his thing, he builds a temple. But then Solomon's grandson, causes a civil war that splits the kingdom again. From then on, for four hundred years, the kings of David, the Davidian kingship we say, continues for four hundred years. Then in 587 B.C. the Babylonians come in and conquer Israel. They take 90some percent of the people outside of the country, hostage. Settle them in other places and make them slaves. The Davidic king dies, because they kill him, the successor of David. 70 years after the captivity, when they are freed, they try to find decedents of David and make him king. It doesn't work. Our book of Samuel that we are reading today, was written 100 years after the last king died. Well, if the king died, and there are no more kings of David, doesn't the promise die? It should. But, something miraculous happened, something in Gods plan. The people kept it in their heart and in their minds; that God is continuing his promise, He's ever faithful, so He will continue His promise, somehow. They didn't know how, but it would continue somehow. So, somebody was going to be raised up they said, to be a shepherd to us, to be a king that will last forever, sitting on His throne forever. And in faith, they waited 600 Years. Their advent lasted 600 years. Can you imagine us saying, "I'm going to wait 600 years for a Christmas tree, lights, and presents?" We're going to shop for 600 years in advent. No way. We don't have that kind of patience, but they did. They waited 600 years and then what happened? The Angel Gabriel goes to a virgin who's about 12 or 13, maybe 14, in the smallest out of the way, looked down upon town, in that part of the world. In fact, there is a saying, "what good can come from Nazareth?" People are saying, nothing good comes out of Nazareth. So, this virgin he comes to, is the lowest of the low in the social order. We're used to for 2000 years, her being the Queen of Heaven, but when she started, she was the lowest person on the social scale. He comes to her, and he tells her, "your son is going to be son of the most high and he will be the Lord God, and he will have the throne of David, his father, and he will rule forever, and there will be no end to it." Once again, six hundred, thousand years later, that verse comes up again; that prophesy from God is now fulfilled. Jesus Christ is the fulfilment from a thousand years ago when God talked to king David through Nathan. How did Jesus become the son of God, become a son of David? A Davidic king? Well, Joseph was of the house of David. So Joseph, transferred that to Mary when he married her. And Mary, giving birth, gave Jesus his succession, gave Him the house of David. He became a Davidic king. In the Jewish world at the time and maybe today, if you have a Jewish mother and a non-Jewish father, you're Jewish. If you have a Jewish father and non-Jewish mother, you're not. You have certain rights from your mother, and that would be your descendants. So, Jesus got the throne of David from His mother. So we have Jesus fulfilling the promise that there will be no end. So, it wasn't broken, it wasn't crushed. God surely had a trail through all these people; 600 years waiting, and it was fulfilled. Finally, it was revealed. And He built the house of David, for David, the real house for David. What is the real house? The Church. The Church is the body of Christ here on earth; the fulfillment of the prophesy. The throne is the throne at Saint John Lateran that the Pope has. Jesus says, "and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." What does that mean? That means evil and death will not end the reign of the Son of David, Jesus Christ here on earth. So, like parents, those of you that are parents. You all have to make decisions for your children that are very unpopular. You have to make decisions for your teenagers that are extremely unpopular and you can't explain it to them. They are not getting their way but you are doing it out of concern for their welfare. You can see, through your experience and maybe wisdom, what's going on for real. God is a father. God is a parent. He sees what's

going on; we don't. He can see through time; we can't. So God says, "look, I'm not going to answer your prayer right now, I'll answer it later. You are not going to get your wish right now; maybe later, maybe not." Because God wants us to learn to be patient. God wants us to learn to wait; to pray while we're waiting, to be charitable while we're waiting, to build up the Church while we're waiting. We are living in an advent, all our lives. We are waiting for the coming of Jesus, again. When he comes to take us home. And so, God says, "if those people waited 600 years for Jesus to come into the world so I could fulfil what I promised to David, then you can wait 20, 30, 60,70 years to be with me in heaven. So, we are during an advent, we're getting ready to celebrate the coming of Christ into the world. God wants us to wait just a little bit more for him to come for us.

God bless you.