

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

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GOSPEL—LUKE 1: 26-38

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

REFLECTION

The first Advent broke in the midst of a pandemic of domination and oppression produced by the Roman Empire. At that time, most of the people lived subjugated, marginalized, and dispossessed. The only favored people were the local elites who had colluded with the Empire and received great privileges.

The first Advent changed this imperial logic and favored the underprivileged who lived on the margins. Today, Luke tells us that the first good news of Advent comes to Nazareth, a small village of Galilee. Young Mary lives there, awaiting the destiny of all women in the village: to get engaged and married at an early age, to give birth to many children, and devote themselves to domestic work their entire life.

Advent is going to transform this reality...

In the midst of the daily routine, Gabriel, the divine messenger visits Mary and greets her:

"Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." This grand greeting perplexes her, and she ponders



its significance. No one had ever greeted the girl who grew up in Nazareth in such a special way. How could she be so favored if she was only a young woman in a small village?

Then, Gabriel announces that she has been favored with the gift of life. Her womb will bear life and she will give birth to a son, who will be called the Son of God, the awaited Messiah. Still troubled, Mary says to Gabriel, "How can this be if I do not yet live with a man?" Gabriel responds that her womb will be a sanctuary of the divine presence, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God."

In the story of the first creation, the presence of the Spirit of God moving over the waters is a prelude to the glorious creation. Later, the power of the Most High overshadows the first humans formed from the dust of the ground and breathes into them the breath of life and they become living beings (Gen 1, 1 and 2, 7).

In this sense, the words of the angel announce the coming of a new creation and the birth of a new humanity, and the womb of Mary of Nazareth will know the first fruit...

When Mary hears this good news, she responds, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Mary responds from her full freedom as a human being, she is free, a slave of no system, but only at the service of God. She, who had lived in marginalization, now has the privilege to witness a re-creation and to participate in giving birth to a new humanity.

Today, in the midst of the pandemic Covid 19, and while we go through difficult times, the good news of Advent comes to us and announces a re-creation. This good news tells us that the Holy Spirit is coming upon us as a prelude of a new creation and that the power of Most High overshadows us to give birth to a new humanity.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who are the underprivileged today and how the pandemic impacts on them?
2. In what ways does the Advent bring good news to the underprivileged today?
3. Who are the messengers in Advent? Who are the sent one to bring good news in Advent?
4. What is the message of Advent to a world that goes through a pandemic?

