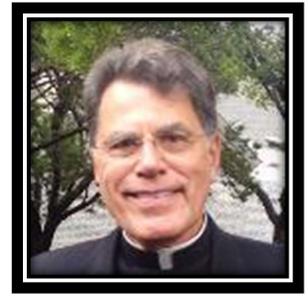


# Fr. Samuel's Homily

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent, December 24, 2017



In my homilies over the course of the past two weekends I have asked you to focus on two words. Both came from the Book of the prophet Isaiah. First there was the word ‘comfort,’ from Isaiah 40: 1: “Comfort, comfort my people.” Then there was the word ‘joy’ from Isaiah 61: 10: “I rejoice heartily in the Lord, for in my God is the joy of my soul.” And then in Mary’s Magnificat when she proclaims: “My spirit rejoices in God my savior.” I told you that comfort comes from two Latin words which together mean ‘with strength.’ Hence ‘comfort’ as expressed by Isaiah refers to God being with us, sharing his strength with us as we live our lives in an imperfect world. And ‘Joy’ refers to our knowing in faith that God is there with us. He does not take away the challenges and suffering of this world. Rather he remains with us granting us the joy of knowing his love and his peace within us in the face of all of the challenges of our lives.

Today we come to the word ‘yes’ as expressed in Mary’s fiat to the angel Gabriel: “Let it be done to me as you say.” Mary’s ‘yes’ was the most important ‘yes’ in the history of humankind. And it was not an easy ‘yes’. There are those who out of misguided and erroneous popular piety that say, “Well, God granted Mary the grace of foreknowledge...” However that is simply not true. That takes away a very important aspect of her ‘yes.’ That is that she assented to what was to come in simple faith and trust in God’s will for her. That is especially evident in the fact that what the angel Gabriel revealed to her would have subjected her to shame and condemnation in Jewish society of her time. She was to become pregnant and not by the man to whom she was betrothed. However Mary accepted the gift of God’s comfort. That is to say she trusted in God and accepted the gift of God’s strength. She accepted as well the gift of joy which was faith that, no matter what was to happen, no matter what she would have to face and even suffer, God would be with her through whatever was to come. And she held to that comfort and that joy throughout her life, even at the foot of the cross.

We are very close now to the celebration of the birth of Jesus. What would our lives be like if we could imitate Mary in her ‘yes’ to God? What would the world be like? The Church tells us in the Sacred Constitution of the Church in the Vatican II documents that we are all called to that. Mary is the example of what it is to be the perfect disciple. If we could say yes like she did to God’s will for us. If we could trust as she did even in the face of suffering. If we could open our heart like she did always to the gift of God’s strength that is there for us. If we could accept the gift of his joy, which is simply having the peace of knowing that God is with us no matter what. What would our lives and what would the world be like?

Perhaps, if we could say yes as Mary did we might really allow Christ to come as king of our hearts. How might things then be different? We might be more open to sharing the gift of God's love with others. We might find that we really can alleviate the problems of this world that cause so much suffering. Perhaps poverty and homelessness would cease to be. Perhaps no longer would we turn to 'solutions' such as abortion, the death penalty and war. Perhaps there would be no more child or spousal abuse or neglect of the elderly. Perhaps all who are ill would have the care that they need? Perhaps greed would end and we would stop destroying the earth that God has entrusted to us as his stewards. If only we could join in to consenting to God's rule in our lives as Mary did, "Let it be done to me as you say," who knows what joy this world would know?