

## REFLECTION FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

We are approaching the great event of the Nativity of Jesus, the celebration of the birth of the One awaited by the nations, the Savior of the world. Throughout this Advent season, we have been invited to prepare for this great moment in our salvation history by making our hearts ready to welcome the One who has already come, but who wants to come into our lives at every moment of our existence. He wants to be born in us. Born in the heart of each one of us.

The readings for this fourth Sunday, the last before Christmas, tell us who this Child is that people have been waiting for, and how we should welcome him today.

In the first reading, the prophet Micah, who lived 700 years before Christ, sows hope among the People of Israel by announcing that in Bethlehem-Ephrathah, a small town in Israel, a new King would be born, who would be a King of the little ones, of the humble, of the poor, so he would not be born on the thrones of Jerusalem, not be born in the rich palaces of the powerful, but born among the poor of Bethlehem, like David. He would be the new King, successor of David, shepherd of Israel, King of peace. God is always born in a poor heart.

In the second reading, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews tells us that Jesus Christ is this King of Peace, who lived his life always in obedience to the Father's will. In him we have been sanctified forever. Like him, we too must try to make our lives a God-lit existence, putting all our trust in the Lord and always seeking to do his will. In this way, we will prepare our hearts to welcome our Savior.

In the Gospel, we accompany Mary and Elizabeth in that meeting of two women in whom God has worked wonders. Mary reveals herself as the one who is in a hurry to meet those who need her. She gets up in a hurry and goes to Elizabeth, to share with her the last moments of her pregnancy. Elizabeth and her son, still in her womb, rejoice at the visit of the Mother of the Lord. They exalt Mary as the most blessed among women, also blessing the fruit of her womb and praising her faith: *“Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”*

Mary and Elizabeth therefore appear to us as models of welcoming the Lord, always ready to accept his will. Elizabeth welcomed Jesus into her heart, into her joy; Mary welcomed him into her womb, but also into her faith, into her whole life. She is the Lady of Yes, the one who gives herself to God's will with total availability: *“I am the handmaid of the Lord... let what you have said be done to me,”* are her words at the Annunciation. [*cf. Luke 1:38*]

We too must live a life of availability to serve God, of surrender to his will. He wants to be born in our hearts, he wants to bring us his peace, his life, and his love. Let us know how to welcome him, knowing that he lives in every brother and sister who knocks on our door; he who asks for our help, who needs us. With Mary, let us learn to get up and go out to meet those who need us, those who need our help. Let us help those who are waiting for a friendly word, a piece of bread, or a gesture of tenderness and peace. Whenever we do this, Christmas will be true in our lives. Jesus will be born in our hearts.

Have a Merry Christmas. Amen.