



*Homily – 4th Sunday of Advent 2011 (B)<sup>i</sup>*

*The Most Rev. José H. Gomez  
Archbishop of Los Angeles*

*Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels  
Los Angeles, California  
December 18, 2011*

My brothers and sisters in Christ:

For these past few weeks we have been preparing ourselves for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have all been trying really hard, I'm sure, to keep our attention on the true meaning for this season, especially trying to overcome the commercial and materialistic approach to Christmas in our society.

These weeks of Advent for us are times of joyful watching and hopeful waiting, times of conversion and penance, as we contemplate God's great love for us and his coming to share his life with us on Christmas Day. Advent is always a very special time in the life of the Church. And I hope that it is for each one of us.

Today, as we start this last week of Advent, our readings from sacred Scripture invite us to learn a little more about the mystery of this great event that we are going to celebrate a week from today. The readings talk to us about the birth of Jesus Christ and how it is a beautiful extraordinary mystery of the love of God.

It is so beautiful to see that in a sense we move from the contemplation of the person of St. John the Baptist, to directly start thinking about Jesus and also about his mother, Mary our Blessed Mother.

St. Paul, in the second reading of today's Mass, describes the coming of Jesus Christ as, "the mystery kept secret for long ages but now manifested ... and made known to all nations to bring about the obedience of faith."

This secret "mystery" that St. Paul is talking about is God's plan of salvation — his plan for the whole world and his plan for each one of us, for every life, for yours and mine too.

In sending Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, into our world, God is "explaining" this mystery.<sup>ii</sup> He is making his purposes known. What was once a secret will not be a secret any more.

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ, his coming in human flesh and assuming a human

nature, tells us the meaning of history. The Incarnation, Jesus coming to earth, tells us the meaning of our lives. And it also shows us the way to true joy and happiness.

So the happiness that we have during Christmas is not just an emotional happiness — because we have lights and Christmas trees and Christmas gifts and all kinds of things. The joy is because God is telling us in the person of Jesus Christ what is his plan for each one of us.

And that's exactly the message that we hear in our Gospel today and also in the first reading for today's holy Mass. These are very interesting passages of sacred Scripture, and I am sure that you noticed that both of them — the first reading and the passage of the Gospel — are both involve conversations. They are both dialogues that talk about God's plan for history.

In the first reading, God is making an eternal covenant with David. He promises that David's throne will last for all generations as an eternal dynasty. He promises that he will give David a son, and this son will not only be the Son of David, but he will also be the Son of God — and the throne of his Kingdom will be established for ever.

My brothers and sisters, God's promise to David was a turning point in the history of salvation. Because in God's plan, the Son of David and Son of God he promises will be the Savior of the world — the Messiah who will guide all the nations of the earth to know God's ways and his salvation.

That's why at the time of Jesus we see that everybody was waiting for the Messiah to come. The Blessed Virgin Mary was looking for the Messiah, and so was St. Joseph. So were Zechariah and Elizabeth and St. John the Baptist, and the shepherds and the Magi — all of them, everybody was waiting for the coming of the Messiah.

And that's exactly what makes today's passage of the Gospel and what we celebrate on Christmas Day so powerful. Because that time of waiting and expectation is coming to an end. In the beautiful words of our Blessed Mother, the Incarnation takes place.

“Hail Mary, full of grace! The Lord is with you!” the Angel tells Mary.

*The child to be born will be ... the Son of God,  
and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,  
he will reign ... forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.*

My brothers and sisters, this dialogue of salvation between the Angel and the Virgin Mary is the most important conversation in human history. The world is changed forever by Mary's answer to the Word of God!

*Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord! May it be done to me according to your Word!*

That's why Christmas is a joyful celebration for all of us. And that's why this coming week, as we prepare for the celebration of Christmas next weekend, we need to pray and contemplate the fulfillment of God's promises in the Child that Mary conceives in her womb.

But only to *know* the beautiful truths of the Incarnation is not enough. We need to listen, to know, to receive them, and to act as a consequence of understanding the beauty of what is happening on Christmas Day — just as Mary did.

We heard St. Paul telling us today: God revealed the secret mystery of his plan for this reason — to bring about, he says, *the obedience of faith*.

Such a beautiful expression. *The obedience of faith*. And Mary our Blessed Mother today gives us a beautiful example of what this obedience of faith means — saying “yes” to God: *Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord! May it be done to me according to your Word!*

My brothers and sisters, we need to learn from Mary. We need to imitate her. We need to open the doors of our souls to the grace of God. To listen to what God is saying to us and to what he is accomplishing in our lives.

God wants each of us to be instruments of his love and hope.<sup>iii</sup> And remember, he is asking us to respond to him, to be obedient in faith in the little things that we have to do every day — smiling, keeping a cheerful attitude, offering some small help to others, being more forgiving, being more generous with our time, accepting our sufferings and setbacks with patience. Finding a little more time to pray and maybe to go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation this week so that we can receive Jesus worthily, in a special way, understanding that what is happening is the most important thing in the history of salvation.

So let's reflect this week on these beautiful truths.

Let us live these days before Christmas by staying very close to Mary, accompanying our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph on their way to Bethlehem. Imitating them, as we see that they live this time of expectation with intensity and joy.

And let us ask our Blessed Mother to help us to live with her same joy, in the obedience of faith, so that Jesus will find us “watching in prayer, our hearts filled with wonder and praise,” when he comes as a Child on Christmas Day.<sup>iv</sup>

---

<sup>i</sup> Readings: 2 Sam. 7:1–5, 8b–12, 14a, 16; Ps. 89:2–5, 27, 29; Rom. 16:25–27; Luke 1:26–38.

<sup>ii</sup> Eph. 3:9.

<sup>iii</sup> Phil. 2:13; 1 Cor. 12:6.

<sup>iv</sup> Preface of Advent II.