



December 24, 2023

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16 | Rom 16:25-27 | Lk 1:26-38

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

“Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.” The angel Gabriel announces this in the Gospel today, and it is a phrase with which we are all familiar thanks to our recitation of the Hail Mary prayer. Although some may be comforted by such a message and its angelic messenger, it is troubling to Mary because the angel goes on to tell her she will conceive and bear the Son of God. Thinking practically, Mary is being told the impossible will happen – who wouldn’t be troubled? And yet Mary offers herself: “I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” Despite her fear and trepidation, Mary went on to answer God’s call and do his will. Our Blessed Mother became a great example of fortitude at that moment, as she exemplified what it means to step outside of our own uncertainty and trust God completely. Although doing God’s will can be difficult at times, St. Paul reminds us in his Letter to the Romans that we can ask God for the strength to say “yes” in spite of our fears.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

Up until today, December has probably been a whirlwind. Trees and lights, ornaments, parties and presents – all these things help to kick off “the most wonderful time of year” beginning soon after Thanksgiving. Come Dec. 26, however, for many, the decorations become a nuisance and Christmas trees are out on the curb for pickup. Thank goodness for our Catholic faith because for us, Christmas is just beginning! Mary didn’t say “may it be done to me” only to forget about it the next day. No, in the coming months, the Blessed Mother nurtured the baby Jesus in her womb, anticipating the arrival of her firstborn and the Son of God. And on that blessed Christmas night, her work as the Mother of God was only just beginning. So, as we anticipate the arrival of the Christ Child, we are joyful that *our* Christmas season continues until we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord on January 8. Let us use this time to draw closer to God and make every effort in the new year to do his will.

SING *Angels, announce with shouts of mirth
Christ who brings new life to earth.
Set every peak and valley humming
With the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the Lord, is on the way.*