

Homily: 4th Sunday of Advent: Cycle C: 2015: Mic 5:1-4; Ps. 80; Heb 10: 5-10; Lk. 1: 39-45

“Preparing for Christmas in the Company of Mary”

1. **We are now entering into the last few days before celebrating the great mystery of the Incarnation on Christmas day: that the eternal Son of God, through the Virgin Mary, fully took on our human nature out of infinite love for us human beings, to save us and point us back to God the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. The best way we can prepare our hearts to receive Jesus in the Christmas mystery is in the company of Mary.** As St. Elizabeth says to her today, “*Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.*” Mary shows us directly to the heart of Christ, as our dear loving spiritual Mother, who is the protector of our interior life given to us by the Blessed Trinity at our Baptism. As our spiritual mother, she is the one who can lead us to an ever deeper life of intimacy with her Son who will lead us to the heart of the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. Please pray her **Rosary** these next few days to spiritually get ready for Christmas. May we also ask her help in order to love the relatives, friends, and parishioners we will encounter over the holidays. To love them all in Christ, and not to get irritable and short with these same people because of the many activities we will be participating in, which can get us stressed out if we are not vigilant in prayer. In moments of temptations to impatience and anger, immediately **pray a Hail Mary** and ask her to help you to love them, like she showed selfless love to St. Elizabeth, her elderly cousin.
2. Some of you here have made a good Confession of your sins this Advent, and have made some sincere spiritual resolutions to live a better life in God’s sight, **please ask Mary to help you to accomplish this in daily practice.** She who is a model of divine obedience throughout her life - but particularly at the Annunciation, when she said to the archangel Gabriel, “*I am the servant of the Lord, let it be done to me as you say*” - can always help us to always say yes to God as well! Through her prayers, she helps us to be docile to the Holy Spirit who gives us the strength and courage, to trust God and be obedient to the Divine commands. May we say with Mary to God on a daily basis, *whatever it is Lord*

that you are asking me to do, may it be done, not according to my will, but Yours alone. To make of our life more and more a selfless gift to God in His service is the greatest gift we can give to Jesus on Christmas day. May Mary help us to sincerely offer ourselves to God in such a beautiful way!

3. ***I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say.*** This is Mary's response to God at the Annunciation and throughout her life. She did **everything** for God and others, not out a sense of obligation, but rather **out of a motive of love**. What a beautiful lesson for us – who often say to ourselves: what's in it for me? She didn't have to visit her cousin St. Elizabeth, and could have been justified on a human level in just staying put at her parents' house, in preparation for being the mother of the long awaited Messiah. But she didn't think of herself: the first thing she thought of after the Annunciation was: how can I help my elderly cousin who is miraculously pregnant? Mary was willing to make that sacrifice to help her cousin, and stayed with her 3 months, because she did it out of love. **Mary was about God's will throughout her life because she knew God loved her and so she wanted to return that love to God and show His love to others.** We can be sure that we are doing God's will if 1. *We have a sense of interior peace (conscience not bothering us and not consciously committing mortal sin).* 2. *We are faithful to daily prayer.* 3. *We are trying to live all of the Catholic Church's teaching on faith and morals.* 4. *We are not neglecting our daily duties in a serious way.* 5. *We are asking the Lord daily to help us grow in charity.* May the blessed Mother also help us to do everything from the motive of love. *To keep the Commandments, out of love. To follow all the teachings of the Catholic Church, out of love. To help others like Mary did, out of love. To do our daily duties in our vocation, out of love. To forgive those who hurt us, out of love. To give of our time, talent and treasure, out of love. To spend significant time with God in prayer each day, out of love. To be grateful to Jesus for coming among us as a little baby, out of love.* **May everything we do be done out of love for God and our neighbor, carrying out the Lord holy will.** Then we will be living out the spirit of Christmas always. God bless you.