



# FILIPINO COMMUNITY IN BRISTOL

FLAT 7, THE GLEBE, GLEBE ROAD, BRISTOL, ENGLAND, BS5 8LU  
TEL. / FAX NO. 0117-9414672

## 4<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT

(21 December 2008)

### FIRST READING:

(2 Samuel 7:1 -5 .8-12.14-16)

*Once David had settled into his house and the Lord had given him rest from all the enemies surrounding him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, "Look, I am living in a house of cedar while the ark of God dwells in a tent." Nathan said to the king, "Go and do all that is in your mind, for the Lord is with you." But that very night the word of the Lord came to Nathan:" Go and tell my servant David. 'Thus the Lord speaks: Are you the man to build me a house to dwell in? I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be leader of my people Israel; I have been with you on all your expeditions; I have cut off all your enemies before you. I will give you fame as great as the fame of the greatest on earth. I will provide a place for my people Israel; I will plant them there and they shall dwell in that place and never be disturbed again; nor shall the wicked continue to oppress them as they did, in the days when I appointed judges over my people Israel; I will give them rest from all their enemies. The Lord will make you great; the Lord will make you a House. And when your days are ended and you are laid to rest with your ancestors, I will preserve the offspring of your body after you and make his sovereignty secure. I will be a father to him and he a son to me. Your House and your sovereignty will always stand secure before me and your throne be established for ever.*

### SECOND READING:

(Romans 16:25-27)

*Glory to him who is able to give you the strength to live according to the Good News I preach, and in which! Proclaim Jesus Christ, the revelation of a mystery kept secret for endless ages, but now so clear that it must be broadcast to pagans everywhere to bring them to the obedience of faith. This is only what scripture has predicted, and it is all part of the way the eternal God wants things to be. He alone is wisdom; give glory therefore to him through Jesus Christ for ever and ever. Amen.*



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## THE GOSPEL:

(Luke 1:26-38)

*The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David: and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, "Rejoice. So highly favoured! The Lord is with you." She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, "Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end." Mary said to the angel, "But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?" "The Holy Spirit will come upon you" the angel answered "and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God." "I am the handmaid of the Lord," said Mary "let what you have said be done to me." And the angel left her.*

## REFLECTIONS:

(Fr. NIL GUILLEMETTE, SJ)

*God could have placed Mary before an accomplished fact and have her announced by the angel that she had already conceived Jesus through the Holy Spirit. But he preferred to solicit the free consent of Mary to cooperate in our salvation. This, not only out of respect for her person, but also to make of her, through a consent enlightened and fully formulated, the cooperator of God in the work of redemption God is always a respecter of persons. He respects our freedom more than we do.*

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*In receiving the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist, Zechariah had asked for a sign capable of convincing him of the truth of the angel's message. But Mary immediately believes this message without asking for a sign. Her question is not the expression of a doubt on her part, but a request of enlightenment for her faith. We too must have a faith which is whole and immediate, but we must also seek as much as possible to have a well-informed faith by humbly asking for enlightenment and, occasionally, by studying or dialoguing with priest. Faith will always remain partially dark in this life, that of Mary as well as ours, but it will be all the more firm and human as it will be enlightened.*



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*The angel provides an explanation to Mary. But even after that explanation, a certain veil of mystery remains, for the way of God are not ours.” However, this explanation will sustain and nourished for a long time the faith of Mary “who kept all these things in her heart pondering them. (2, 19). The same goes for us. The reflection which the Church proposes in the Sunday Preaching and in the catechetical teaching is not aimed at dispensing us from making an act of faith; but it must sustain and nourish that faith. Out of sheer kindness, God gives Mary a sign (the fertility of the Elizabeth) which confirms the angel’s word and facilitates Mary’s faith This sign is not indispensable to Mary, who already believes the Angel’s word. It is given to her as an added grace. Our case is the same. Sometimes God sends us a very clear sign of his presence or of his will (great spiritual consolation, humanly Unexplainable “Coincidence” which changes the Course of our life, etc.). Such signs are not indispensable to faith and we should not wait for them before giving ourselves to God. Nevertheless if God grants them out of sheer graciousness, we must then thank him and remain in humility, like Mary.*

*Mary is completely available to the Lord’s will, like a simple servant. And yet, she does not have any clear idea as to where this will of God will lead her. But she says ‘yes’ in faith and love. We too are asked to be available, flexible, abandoned to the ways of Providence. However we know that, whatever the mysterious detours used by God, His aim is to bring us to complete intimacy with him in this life and the full possession of him in the afterlife. We must therefore abandon ourselves to God’s Will with Mary’s active availability and trust. Then we will know the joy of seeing God accomplish “great things” through his humble servants. (1, 49).*

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*God can give fertility to a virgin’s womb just as he can render fruitful the life of a great sinner: with God nothing is impossible.*

**- A Forgiven Servant**