

Homily
Friday of the Fourth Week of Advent
December 23, 2022

Today is the last day of Advent, the culmination of weeks of preparation, and we still ask each other, “Are you ready for Christmas?” and the sentiment is always the same, “Have you put up all the decorations? Are you traveling or staying home? Are you gathering with family? Have you purchased all the Christmas presents?”

It’s sad but true, we too often forget the real meaning of the question, “are you ready for Christmas.” Have I prepared myself? Have I removed unnecessary distractions? Is my heart ready to receive Him?

Two weeks ago, on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, the Angel Gabriel greets Mary and tells her what God is going to do. Mary is an unknown, simple, young girl, relatively unknown in her community. But she is very dedicated to God; she knows and trusts the Lord. In response to Gabriel, she asks, “How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?” Her question is based in faith as she affirms it will happen, but only asks how. Gabriel explains. She then verbally acknowledges her acceptance of Gabriel’s reply, Mary’s Fiat, an act of the will. How accepting are we of God? Do we trust in the Lord? Really trust Him? Do we acknowledge His power and might? Do we align our will to His? Or do we try to align His Will to ours? Mary was ready. And she didn’t have Advent to help her prepare. Her heart was open to God.

This past Monday, we hear that Zechariah is also greeted by the Angel Gabriel, who told him his prayer had been answered. Zechariah, a prominent leader in his community, known by all, standing in the sanctuary of the Lord, responds with, “How shall I know this?” His question is out of pride and arrogance in the way he must understand before he believes. Gabriel sees this and responds with authority and with a consequence, telling Zechariah that, “I am Gabriel, who stand before God. I was sent to speak to you and to announce to you this good news. But now you will be speechless and unable to talk until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled at their proper time.” Zechariah was not ready. He was not prepared. His heart was distracted with earthly concerns.

In today’s Gospel, we see that Gabriel’s promise was fulfilled and Zechariah’s “mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing God.” It took a proverbial slap in the face to wake Zechariah up.

Tomorrow is Christmas Eve and tomorrow evening begins the Christmas Season when we receive the Incarnate Word, the Son of God and Son of Mary, our very Brother. We’ve had this beautiful season of Advent to prepare. Are we ready?