

I have come to the point in life where I believe that things happen for a reason, that life's little coincidences are probably not accidental, but rather; in the grand scheme of my life, there is a Master Plan. Now, if only I could just be clued in as to what that plan is I would be ecstatic. Don't get me wrong, there are some little hints here and there; a thought, an idea, a feeling or simply the realization that things seem to work out. Sometimes it is a conversation, a book or movie, an article or interview and sometimes it is the 3 readings to which I have been assigned to write a homily this evening. Some refer to events such as these as synchronicity, I refer to them as OK, OK, I GET IT!

I find there to be 2 themes in tonight's readings. The first is very distinct and is of Promises and Fulfillment.

In the first reading we hear God speaking to Nathan, instructing him to tell David, King of Israel, not to build a house for God, but rather that "I will build a house for you. Your house and your dynasty will endure before me. Your throne will stand firm forever. God is making a promise to David that after the years of strife and suffering endured by the Israelites, He will "plant them, so that they may dwell in their place without further disturbance."

In the Gospel we hear the Angel Gabriel tell Mary that "You will conceive and bear a son and will name him Jesus. He will be

known as the Only Begotten of God. God will give Jesus the judgment seat of David, his ancestor, to rule over the house of Israel forever, and this reign will be without end.” God has sent a messenger to announce how he will fulfill his promise, made 17 centuries prior, to David.

Lastly, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading we hear Paul educating the Romans that Jesus Christ is the “Good News which reveals the mystery hidden for many ages but now manifested through the writings of the prophets, and at the command of the eternal God, made known to all the Gentiles that they may believe and obey.” A reminder that God, through the birth, death and ascension of Jesus, has fulfilled his promise to David.

Promises and fulfillment, agreements from God, conveyed by 3 messengers, a prophet, an angel and a disciple and given to ordinary people; remember, prior to becoming King of Israel, David was simply a shepherd, albeit the ruddy handsome one, he was not invited to the family banquet, but was left out in the pasture to tend to his flock. Very Cool symbolism here, but I digress. He was handpicked by God and yet was not valued by his family. I only know all this because the last time I was your honored homilist, I got the initial story of David. See, no coincidences, trust me I do not know the bible chapter and verse.

Mary was Mary, I do not believe she was aware she was born without original sin, I am sure she thought herself a rather ordinary girl and yet she was also handpicked by God, to bear his Son.

Much more learned people than me write of these passages and their historical relevance as well as the anticipation of the Birth during this Advent Season; the sense of excitement and waiting, the longing for the fulfillment of God's promise. In my research, I read of Michelangelo's sculptures of Mary and Jesus, of David as 1 of the 3 great Kings of Israel, along with Saul and Solomon, of the wonder of the Advent Season and how Paul's letter is probably the work of a Deutero-Pauline editor of Romans but is certainly not the work of Marcion. Huh!! What are you people talking about?? Recently I felt the same way while trying to read Aristotle and Plato for my course work; What are you guys talking about? I wrote 6 papers, under extreme duress and found that I did understand, I just had to break it down for myself and apply my thought process, listen to my gut and find what spoke to me.

It is the second theme in this evening's readings which really speaks to me. I find these reading to be about Faith and Belief. It is much more subtle in its expression within the readings, almost like an afterthought, and yet, I find this theme to be like a flashing

neon light of 1970's Times Square. Very alluring, designed to stop you dead in your tracks and draw you in, entice you with whatever pleasures may be awaiting.

There is a lot of uncertainty and instability in my life these days. I have not had a permanent full time job in over a year, I am attending college and not able to commit to a traditional position, so I have been scurrying about as a temp in office work, catering and offering personal services. On paper my life is a mess right now and yet I know everything is going to be okay, that I am being looked after and I just need to continue moving forward, do the next right thing (or even wrong thing) and put one foot in front of the other and let go of the results. I think this is why the readings speak to me in such a manner.

Tonight's Gospel is the Annunciation. Mary is a young woman and she is visited by the Angel Gabriel with the greeting "Rejoice O highly favored one! God is with you. Blessed are you amongst women." My translation goes on to say Mary was deeply troubled by these words and wondered what the angel's greeting meant. I'll say! First off, what was she doing right before he arrived? In the picture on the bulletin, she is shown sitting quietly reading, I am sure we are to believe she was reading the Torah, she was a devout Jew after all, and there is a winged angel behind her. How did Mary know the guy was an angel? Do

they really have wings? Here she is, sitting in her room, reading her holy book and some guy just appears; did he knock? Wonder if she was reading 2 Samuel, now that would be synchronicity. He then goes on to tell her she has found favor with God and is to bear a son. Hello, what a pick up line, you are to bear God's child and oh, by the way I am His messenger or rapist. At this point, any woman in NYC would have her can of mace out and Gabe would be singing in a mezzo soprano for the next several days.

Mary responds with a question, "How can this be, since I have never been with a man?" Gabe then explains how she will be visited upon by the Holy Spirit and after some other pleasantries and chit chat about Elizabeth being pregnant as "nothing is impossible with God", Mary says, and I quote, "I am the servant of God. Let it be done to me as you say."

Come Again? Huh??????????

I mean really now. Here is a girl who is all of what, 13 maybe, she is engaged but not yet married and she is a virgin, and she has just agreed to become the Mother of God. She did not question her physical safety or the messenger's intentions, she was a bit puzzled and distressed by his greeting, but he smooth talked her fears and got her to agree to carry GOD in her womb. Did she know she was the chosen one, that only she, of

the millions of women born prior, she was the only person ever born without the stain of Original Sin. Well except for Adam and Eve, but look where they got us. Did God have some back up virgins, also born of Immaculate Conception that we do not know about, just in case?

This is Faith, this is belief in a Higher Power, this is trust in God and quite frankly, I cannot even fathom it. WE are not talking 21<sup>st</sup> century New York where the 17 year old daughter of the right wing vice presidential candidate is knocked up by her red neck hockey player boy friend. No this is 1<sup>st</sup> century Nazareth. Can you imagine the consequences? We are not talking about a school hallway full of snickering junior high school classmates and disapproving looks from teachers. We are not talking graffiti on lockers and the occasional SLUT hurled by a passerby, there is no welfare programs and well baby programs. No this is Galilee. Do we not learn in later gospel readings that women were stoned to death for amoral behavior? What are the neighbors going to think, not to mention Mary's family, and oh yeah, her fiancé Joseph, remember him, he does not have a great role in the Gospel yet, but she is engaged to be married. Imagine that conversation. Honey, we need to talk. I am going to have a baby, but not just any baby, it is God's child. You see I was in my room reading and this angel visited me and told me the Holy Spirit

would come upon me, if I said it was ok. So I said yes. But I still belong to you and I have not been with a man, it is God who did this. I'm sure that went over well.

"I am the servant of God. Let it be done to me as you say." The Gospel Acclamation, "I am the servan of God: may God's will for me be done." These are actually very similar to one of my morning prayers, I arise today oh God to do Your will, allow me to be of service to You and to others. Followed by the Lord's Prayer, with "thy will be done", the Serenity Prayer and a little ditty that goes, I offer myself to thee to do with me as thou will. Before or sometimes after this litany I remind God I am relatively unemployed, would like a career, need some stability and thank him for the gifts of the day prior then suggest some he might forward my way that day.

I ask God for His guidance throughout the day, that I do His Will and that I KNOW His Will. Hey God, I trust you, I believe in you, but cut me a break here, could you clue me in, could you tell me the plan. Am I moving in the right direction? Is this your will? Hey Dude, give me a break, this cannot be your will. Yo God, do you really want me to be a bartender, a cater waiter, a personal assistant? Isn't your will that I be a Nobel laureate, an Oscar Winner, at least a Tony Award? Fine I'll take the mega millions if it be your will, come on God, work with me here. Hey, what is

your plan, I'm dying here, I need to know, it is too frightening, too uncertain, I am scared.

Be careful what you ask for, would we really want to know the plan? "I am the servant of God. Let it be done to me as you say." No questions, no conditions. Faith and belief. It is the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent, we know the rest of the story, Mary felt a fluttering in her womb, (according to my Liturgical Advisor this is the next sentence in the passage) 9 months later, though supposedly this story takes place in the sixth month, therefore Jesus Birthday should be in March, like me, nevertheless 9 months later Mary gives birth. She gives birth in a stable; the child is placed in a manger. Good grief, think about it. After everything else, Mary is 9 months pregnant and has to go home to Bethlehem to be counted for the census. She has had to travel on a donkey, gets to town and is in labor and they are told, Oh sorry, we are out of room here, then the innkeeper, seeing she is in distress and about to drop a kid offers to let her stay in the barn with the cattle, where she has Jesus, the son of God, and has to place him in a feed bin full of straw for warmth. Let's forget what is going to happen 33 years down the road or in 3 months out on our calendar for now. In 4 days, we are to celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Christ Child. The fulfillment of God's promise to David and the fulfillment of God's promise to us. If Mary knew, would



she still have said yes? Somehow, I think so and all I can say is  
“God Bless you, Mary” you are a better woman than I.