Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year Two (Lk 1:26-38)

**NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE TO GOD**

When a virgin protests to God's messenger that virgins can't bear children, there is only one way for the angel to reply: "Nothing is impossible to God" (Lk 1:37). There are no convincing arguments to use in answering such a sensible protest. You can only state the fact: God's ways are not always our ways. Then, challenge the person to believe you.

It is enlightening to watch Mary's progress in faith in this brief communication. She heard God propose the impossible, which deeply disturbed her. She asked *herself* what it could mean. This may be as far as we get when something difficult is asked of us. We ask *ourselves*, we don't let God in on the conversation, and we produce the answer: "It's impossible for me to be any different to what I am, or any better, or more actively involved than I am, so please forget about it."

Mary went a step further. She asked the angel: "How can this come about since I am a virgin?" The angel represents the presence of God, who is closer to us than our own breathing. Mary stopped to pray. She asked God an obvious question, and she listened while God spoke to her. The answer was still the same: "It's impossible for *you.* But nothing is impossible to God."

God invited Mary: "Trust me, commit yourself to me, allow me to take over your life, and to lead you wherever I would like you to go. The whole of your life from this moment will be impossible to *you*, but nothing is impossible to *me*." Mary responded in full faith: "Let what you have said be done to me." We notice that she had to grow into her commitment. It didn't happen automatically without an effort on her part. Mary is our model of faith.

The Annunciation highlights God's free activity among us, for his own purposes. God is creative and unpredictable. All merely human possibilities are ruled out: the woman is a virgin; no man is involved. Conception is impossible from the human point of view. But the virgin conceived, and the child was born. So, God has special plans for this child, who can claim a virgin as his mother and only God as his Father.

There is a practical lesson in it for each of us. We place a high value on efficiency, sound planning, foresight, prudent safety measures, insurance, no-nonsense arrangements. All this is good, provided we leave room for God and his plans that often don't make sense to us. We can easily get so involved in our own plans, that we squeeze God out of our decisions and activity.

We can be so convinced that our way of doing things is the best that any variation from it is most annoying, frustrating, even infuriating. At this rate, God himself becomes our chief annoyance and hindrance. Our best cannot limit God. He will break out and do the unexpected.

God's ways are often different from ours. Unless God builds the house, in vain do we labour at building. Mary, of all people, understood this with her heart, and she agreed to live with the consequences: "Let what you have said be done to me" (Lk 1:38).