

# Sunday Homily

## 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

20 DECEMBER 2020

YEAR B

“Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord;  
let it be with me according to your word.’”

Luke 1:38

### Illustration

Relationships are very delicate things. When they are healthy, they help us to grow in confidence and maturity and they free us to relate better to others, because we know that we are loved and valued. If our important relationships are healthy, we are able to think beyond our own needs and concerns and look to others. However, unhealthy relationships can be very damaging: they can actually make us more selfish and preoccupied with our own little world. They can make us feel very insecure, and insecurity can manifest itself in many different ways.

One of them, and it is a danger in any relationship, is the desire to own the other person, to control them, to possess them and keep them for ourselves. Whether it be a relationship between adults or children, as soon as we cease to treat the other with respect and just see them as an object to satisfy our own needs rather than as persons with needs and concerns of their own, then that relationship becomes unhealthy and damaging for all concerned. We do not love the other person as ourselves, but we are concerned only for ourselves.

### Gospel Teaching

Today’s readings give us an example of a healthy and an unhealthy relationship with God. David has an apparently natural desire to do something for God by building a Temple. But his motives are mixed: a Temple in his capital city would help him consolidate control over his kingdom. He tries to use God for his own political purposes, but God none too gently reminds David of who exactly is in control. We can all be tempted like David. He wanted to use God for his own ends. We, too, want a tame God, a God who doesn’t challenge us or ask awkward questions about our lives. We prefer a God who acts as a crutch or support when we need him, but not one who makes us uncomfortable.

Contrast this with Mary. She was engaged to be married, she had her own plans for her future. Her life seemed settled, ordered. Yet she allowed God to enter her life and upset all her own hopes and intentions. This was no easy thing for Mary to accept – she is initially disturbed and confused by Gabriel’s message, and needs the angel to reassure her. She very naturally asks questions – she doesn’t understand how what God wants can be done.

But Mary has a healthy relationship with God. She allows God to be a real person in her life, not an object who is there just to make her feel good. She allows her relationship with God to challenge her to grow as a person, to grow into the person God had created her to be. Above all, unlike David, she needs no reminding of who she is and who God is. She doesn't try to make God compromise. She simply acknowledges that she is God's servant: she makes God's will her own, not the other way round. And as she surrenders herself and her will and her whole life to God, so she begins to live the fullness of life that her son, our saviour, came to bring.

## Application

As the great event of Christ's birth, Christmas, draws near, Mary offers us a timely example of how we can enjoy a healthy relationship with God and what the consequences might be. God will make demands of us because he wants us to grow into the people he has created us to be. He wants us to live life in all its fullness, and he knows how it can be possible. As with Mary, he wants our relationship with him to be life-giving both for ourselves and for others.

We too are offered the opportunity to say "Yes" to God. We too are his servants, we too can surrender ourselves and our lives to God. It may cost us everything, but it is the way to life in all its fullness, because as we surrender ourselves and open our hearts to God, so he will fill us with his love and presence. And God's love can continue to be made real in our world through our relationship with him and with those he gives us to love. That is what our heavenly Father wants for us this Advent.