

4th Sunday of Advent – B - 2008

LESSON: Nothing Is Impossible with God

In just a few days, we will celebrate the **birth of our Savior**, Jesus Christ.

- ? When we do, this church building will be **fuller** than any other time of the year.
- ? It is **good** that so many people come to welcome the newborn Jesus – even if they don't come at any other time of year.

But those of us here today can intensify our **spiritual preparation for Christmas** by asking ourselves why so many people who come on **Christmas** stay away at **other** times.

Maybe it's because they feel **torn** inside.

- ? On one hand, they feel **drawn to the baby Jesus**, God so **gentle and kind**, so eager to **befriend** them that he makes himself **small**.
- ? But on the **other** hand, they are **afraid**.
- ? They are afraid that if they really make a **commitment** to Jesus, if they really make an **effort** to build a friendship with him, then they will have to follow his **commandments and teachings**.

And those teachings are not **popular** in today's society.

- ? Jesus is **pro-life**, but our culture **isn't**.
- ? Jesus lived in **humility and simplicity**, but our culture suffers from **over-indulgence** and **consumerism**.
- ? Jesus was **truthful**, but our culture encourages **deception, lies**, and virtual, "Second Lives".
- ? Jesus was **faithful**, but our culture encourages **superficiality, hook-ups, divorce**, and irresponsible quick-fixes.

And so maybe our neighbors are torn: they feel Jesus **tugging** at their heart, but the tug of our **secular culture** is just as strong, if not stronger.

- ? They fear that if they follow Jesus, it will be **impossible to be happy**, because they will have to give up things that our culture says are **necessary** for happiness.
- ? But today the Church is reminding us, through the angel's words to Mary "**Nothing** will be impossible with God."
- ? God can do all things, and no matter **what** we have to give up in order to live in friendship with him, he will give us much, **much more**.

ILLUSTRATION: Don Bosco's Multiplication Tables

This doesn't mean that God will always do everything **we want** - he knows better than we do what is **truly good** for us.

But even so, he sends us plenty of **reminders** that he is in charge, so that we don't get **discouraged**.

One **eloquent** reminder is from the life of **St John Bosco**, founder of the **Salesians**, who died in 1888.

- ? He began a ministry for **poor boys and orphans** that taught them a **trade** during the day, and gave them school and faith instructions in the **evening**.
- ? Every day he would **spend time with** the many boys in his school, and every morning he would hear **confessions** before breakfast.
- ? It was a common occurrence for the saint to point out, in the confessional, **sins** that the boys had **forgotten** or were **afraid** to confess.

One day in 1848 St John was celebrating **Mass** in honor of the Feast of the Annunciation.

- ? The small church was filled with **360 boys and young men**.
- ? When the time came for **Holy Communion**, he went to the tabernacle to remove the Hosts.
- ? To his great **surprise** he discovered that **only 8 Hosts** were reserved there - not **nearly** enough for the large congregation.
- ? Many people present, including Giuseppe Buzzetti [boot-SEHT-ee], who would later become one of the first Salesian priests and who was the **altar server** during that Mass, saw John Bosco's **predicament** and wondered what would happen.
- ? The saint **removed** the 8 Hosts from the tabernacle and began **distributing** Holy Communion.
- ? As the young Giuseppe followed the priest with the **paten**, he was amazed to watch as the ciborium **continued to fill up with Hosts**, miraculously allowing for **everyone** present to receive Holy Communion.

God sends miracles like these every once in awhile to **boost our confidence**, to remind us that **nothing is impossible** for Him.

APPLICATION: Doing Two Things

As we continue preparing our souls for Christ's arrival in the Christmas liturgy, we really should do **two things**.

First, we should **stir up the virtue of gratitude in our hearts**.

- ? We are here today because God has **protected our faith** from the many **lies** all around us saying that Jesus is not really **Lord and Savior** or that his Church is **nothing special**.
- ? God has protected us from **giving up our hope** in the power of his mercy and grace.
- ? We have fought (and maybe are still fighting) **spiritual battles** against doubt, discouragement, and other temptations, and **God** has fought **on our side**.
- ? By God's grace, we are **Christmas lights that still work**, Christians still living their friendship with Christ; we should be extremely **grateful** for that.

Second, we should make an effort **to help someone else take a step closer to Christ** this Christmas.

- ? In this Mass, Jesus will **prove** once again that **nothing** is impossible for him.
- ? He will **shatter** the limits of time and space to become truly present in the Eucharist, nourishing us in Holy Communion with his holy body, blood, soul, and divinity.
- ? If he can do that, then he can do **anything**.
- ? And so, we should **not hesitate** to **let him work through** our words, prayers, and actions to bring Christ's light into some **dark corner of the world** where his light is not shining.
- ? That dark corner may be a **poor orphan**, a **relative's bitter resentment**, or an **elderly person's loneliness**.

We all know that God can do all things – we have experienced the power of His forgiveness, His goodness & His love. But today, as Christmas is right around the corner, we know there are those who will come to Mass this Christmas – and it will be the **only Mass** they come to all year long.

- ? we should think about all those people who **haven't** yet experienced God's goodness,
- ? who are **afraid** that following Christ and his teachings will make happiness **impossible**, (at least according to the way the world defines “happiness.”)
- ? who only come to Mass on **Christmas**.

Is there anything **we can do** so that

- ? **this** year their Christmas Mass will not be just a “speed bump” in their spiritual life,
- ? but the **beginning of a new friendship with Christ**,
- ? of a **new journey of faith** with the God for whom **nothing** is impossible?

Yes. There are at least **two things** we can do.

First, starting today, starting right now, during this Mass, we can **pray for them**.

- ? If we ask the Lord to **open their hearts** in a new way this Christmas, maybe he will.
- ? And if we **know** someone in this situation, let's pray for them by **name**.

- ? God has made us **partners** in his work of salvation; our prayers, united to Christ, can make a **real difference**.

Second, we can ask God to help them **through us**.

- ? If we put our lives at **God's disposal** during these days, as **Mary** did in today's Gospel,
- ? he may put us in situations where our faith and experience of God can **shine** in a **darkened heart**, like spiritual Christmas lights.

We cannot be afraid to **let our light shine**, **speaking** about the true meaning of Christmas, and backing up our words with our **behavior**.

Let's make it our task, thanking God for His goodness to us and counting on **God's grace** at work in us, to somehow help them make Christmas Mass into the **new beginning** of a real, **everlasting friendship** with Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior: for us and for those who only come once a year.

After all, "**Nothing** is impossible for God."