

## Homily of Fourth Sunday of Advent Year B

Have you ever had what you considered an excellent plan, made all necessary arrangements, and when you were about to execute the plan, it was stopped by a higher authority, or by an incident? Different people respond or react in different ways. Some people get very upset and disobedient. In their disobedience they go ahead with their plan. Some people get very upset, they do not go ahead with their plan, but they refuse to cooperate with other plans. Some people feel disappointed, but are very willing to proceed with available alternative plans.

In the first reading, David had a wonderful plan of building a temple for the Lord. Although Prophet Nathan had given David an approval, the Lord did not approve David to build the temple. The Lord's plan was that the temple would be built by David's heir. David accepted the Lord's plan. However, David went ahead to make preparations for building the temple. He procured all the materials needed for the building of the temple (1 Chronicles 22).

Mary, in the Gospel, was already living in Joseph's family. Joseph had been declared as Mary's husband. Before Mary could move into Joseph's house, the angel brought her the message that she was to conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit. There was not going to be sexual relations with Joseph anymore. Mary said to the angel, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."

Paul and Timothy had a similar experience, *"They traveled through the Phrygian and Galatian territory because they had been prevented by the Holy Spirit from preaching the message in the province of Asia. When they came to Mysia, they tried to go on into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them, so they crossed through Mysia and came down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision. A Macedonian stood before him and implored him with these words, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' When he had seen the vision, we sought passage to Macedonia at once, concluding that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them"* (Acts 16:6-10).

David, Mary, Paul and Timothy said 'yes' to God when he changed their plan according to the mind of God. They are examples for us to emulate. Jesus says, "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work" (John 4:34). "I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me" (John 6:38). In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus says, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). On the Cross Jesus prayed, "Still, not my will but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). See what follows, "And to strengthen him an angel from heaven appeared to him" (Luke 22:43). This teaches us that God sends his angel to strengthen us when we give up our will and do his will. Jesus says, "For whoever does the will of God is my brother and my sister and my mother" (Mark 3:35). St. Paul writes, "Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of

your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect” (Romans 12:2).

How do we discern what is the will of God? The candle of love we lit today helps us to have some idea. The first Christmas happened because, as Jesus says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (John 3:16). Jesus, also, says, “You shall love the Lord your God ... You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:30). Therefore, love is the key to discerning God’s will.

It is God’s will when it is, first, done for love of God; second, for love of neighbor, and lastly, for love of oneself. Whereby, when an action is done for love of oneself first, before the love of God and neighbor, then that action is not the will of God.

The Advent Season concludes today. We began our Advent journey in the first week, as we prayed, “Lord, increase our hope.” Second week, we prayed, “Lord, make us instruments of peace.” Third week, we prayed, “Lord, increase our joy, and let us be instruments of joy to others.” Today, we are praying with Mary, “May it be done to [us] according to your word.” And, “Lord, teach us to love.” Let us love God and our neighbor by reaching out and sharing love with the needy this Christmas.

Fr. Martin Eke, MSP