

My dear brothers and sisters, Advent is almost over and Christmas begins tonight. The Church turns our attention to the **Promise God made to King David**. Today's first reading contains a deep meditation of King David. The reading begins: when King David was settled in his palace, and the Lord had given him rest from his enemies on every side, he said to Nathan the prophet, "**Here I am living in a house of cedar, while the Ark of God dwells in a tent**" (2 Sm.7:1-2)! King David was disturbed that he was living in a house made of cedar and the Ark of God remained in a tent. He had approached Nathan the prophet about building a house for the Ark. God spoke to Nathan about David's desire: Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth... Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; **your throne shall be established forever** (2 Samuel 7:8-11).

God turns the tables on David. He tells David that, rather than having David build him a house, he would build David and all Israel a house, and that this house would be established forever. God was saying that he is the one who provides for his people and not the other way around. In today's Gospel, this prophecy has been fulfilled. St. Luke tells us the story in a very simple way, that God sent angel Gabriel to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David: and the virgin's name was Mary... **God chose to be born of a virgin; centuries earlier he disclosed this through the prophet Isaiah** (Is.7:14). At the time the angel of God visited Mary, 400 years of silence had passed since God had spoken to his people through any prophet. During this period, there were many political upheavals for Israel. Influences from foreign nations had undermined much of Israel's understanding and hope concerning the plans and promises of God.

When the Angel appeared to Mary, how could she have possibly understood what she was being told? The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end" (Lk.1:30-33). What is remarkable is that, though Mary could not have fully understood what the angel was saying, she was able to receive it on faith. Mary responded: "**Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word**" (Luke 1:38).

Mary shows us how to be a follower of Jesus by making a loving surrender into the hands of God who loves us. When we wonder if we can make such an **act of trust and abandonment into the hands of God** let us remember that when God calls us he also gives us the grace. On the day you were baptized or were married, you and your spouse were also united with Jesus Christ because your marriage is a sacrament. The grace of that sacrament is yours for the asking. Even when something seems impossible, you must believe like Mary that when God calls you he will also supply you with the grace. Surrendering to God, making that act of trust or abandonment into the hands of God, is not easy. It means letting go and like Mary facing the unknown, which scares us.

Finally, dear friends, let us ask ourselves what gave Mary the strength to say: behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word (Lk. 1:38). Obviously her life of prayer that gave her the strength to be obedient to God's call. She was full of grace and the Lord was with her (Lk. 1: 28). She had a deep faith to fulfill her high calling. She submitted to God's plan in faith. As we are preparing for Christmas, let us submit ourselves to the will of God so that we can prepare our hearts in faith to be worthy mangers to receive Jesus Christ. Amen!