

## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Advent (B)

- If you open the weekend newspapers you find that they are filled with words giving facts, opinions, information, advertising – the papers are much bigger than they used to be to accommodate all these words of communication.
- I'm sure that as you listen to the radio or watch TV, the words pour out at a more rapid pace than they used to 20-30 years ago – in order to fit in as much as possible in the limited time allocated to them.
- The explosion of social media & info tech bombards us with words.
- There are so many words spoken & written that we can tend to switch-off, so that they go in one ear & out the other, or our eyes can glaze over the over-abundance of words that it becomes difficult to discern what is worthwhile reading - We can only take in so much, that we can tend to filter-out the words, being interested only in those that we think are significant to us.
- And with the great proliferation of the spoken & written word, there seems to have emerged also a wide acceptance that words have lost their power for good & creativity – at times they have become, at best, cheap & empty, & at worst, nothing other than lies expressed by leaders of people, or what we have come to know in recent years as fake news, designed to confuse & lead astray from the truth.
- But we can also miss things with this filtering, & at times we can regret not having listened to something that we can later discover was really important.
- Even our Christian liturgy can be filled with too many words that try to deal with the mystery we celebrate, that we can tune-out & miss what can be significant, but the whole notion of the 'word' has been crucial in our Jewish/Christian tradition.
- The spoken word was considered in biblical times to be powerful & creative – where what has been spoken actually comes into being.
- For the Jewish people in biblical times, written contracts signed by parties engaging in agreements, simply did not take place because the spoken word was enough to be effective of what had been agreed upon – the exchanged spoken words were binding because they were a communication of the self.
- Even more powerful, creative & effective was God's Word.
- The words God spoke at creation brought about what God intended – God said "Let there be..." & it came into being.
- God's word brought about what there was not before.
- The words spoken by the prophets were God's words, & not their own.
- Often the prophets introduced & concluded what came from their lips by declaring – "It is the Lord who speaks..."
- God used prophets to say in human words God's intentions.
- God's word in history takes on human form in the person of Jesus of Nazareth – he is God's very self-expression.
- What we celebrate at Christmas is the Incarnation – or the human enfleshment of God's word of himself & the words of love he expresses to us.
- Everything that can possibly be said by God of Godself is done so in Jesus Christ.

- If we want to know God, who he is, what he is like, what his plan for us is, what his relationship with us is about, we have that in Jesus Christ.
- Fundamental to our Christian faith is that in Jesus, God is flesh & blood, body & spirit – a human person.
- But still more wondrous is that God only operates with us through human cooperation – God does not impose himself on us.
- In fact, the beginning of the story of our relationship with God is portrayed in the story of Adam & Eve, who are also the creative products of God's word, but who reject God – they accepted the gift of life & all of what that means, but rejected the Giver because they want to be free to control that life as they please – without God.
- Today we listen in the Gospel to God's creative word becoming flesh in Mary, but only through her positive response.
- It is hypothetical to consider what would have happened if Mary failed to listen, or even refused, but the point of the Gospel is that with Mary's cooperation & expression of the word – 'Yes', God becomes a human person.
- In this story Luke wants to paint the picture for us how through faith, the impossible becomes not only possible, but a reality – how God can enter into the life, affairs & relationships of every human person.
- This story of Luke is written, not just to express the dogma of the Incarnation, but so that we, like Mary, can be open to God's saving work within us, & let God's word take shape & flesh in our lives as well.
- Unlike the Temple, built by David, to make a place for God among his people, God makes a place for himself in us, with our cooperation & with our word of – 'yes'.
- Why people often fail to recognize or hear God is because we want to see & hear him in the 'awesome', but God comes in the ordinary, where we don't expect – in the ordinariness of a human person – Jesus; in the ordinariness of our lives.
- The world in which we live & the events of which we are a part are the stage upon which the drama of salvation is enacted.
- God works through real flesh & blood people, those like David, who occupy the seats of power & influence as well as those like Mary & us, who are unseen & unknown. All can be agents of salvation.
- God's future is in our hands. Human history is really the history of salvation.
- In the face of the impossible, God works the possible through his Word.
- During Advent, we have been waiting for the realisation of the promise made to David. We have been waiting for Mary's 'yes'.
- With this 'yes', hope is enlivened, & history is changed.
- There is an unimaginable future for all people, a future that comes from God.
- Salvation is created among us, & the fate of history is altered by a godly presence.
- This salvation resides in the hearts of those who believe in the gift, & who stay awake eagerly to know its coming.
- God's Word is powerful, creative & pregnant with love for us.
- Our words can be empty or even destructive; they can however be life-giving, creative & loving, especially as a response to God's creative word in us.