

## FR. PETER'S 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT HOMILY ...

There is an old saying: "If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans."

King David decided that God needed something better than a tent to dwell in amongst his chosen people.

But God had other plans.

God doesn't need a physical house in which to live to be with his children. He is always among them ... among us.

But God promises to build – to establish – a house for David.

God will raise up an heir to David through whom David's house – his kingdom – will endure forever.

This was to remain the hope and prayer of the people of Israel.

And this was the hope and prayer of a young woman from Nazareth named Mary.

Mary, a faithful daughter of Israel, hoped and prayed for the fulfillment of God's promise to King David.

She hoped and prayed for the coming of the Messiah, the king whose reign would last forever.

And she understood what kind of king God would send, the kind of king described last week in the Book of the prophet Isaiah. Remember?

God promised that the Messiah, the Christ, his Anointed One would:

-Bring glad tidings to the poor

-Heal the broken-hearted

-Proclaim liberty to captives

-Release to prisoners

-Announce a year of favor from the Lord.

This is what Mary longed for and prayed for. But could she have imagined that the Lord's promise would be fulfilled through her?

Artists through the ages have often depicted Mary as praying when the Angel Gabriel came to her. That would make sense, for in prayer we are most open to God's will for us.

Luke tells us that Mary was "greatly troubled" at what the angel said and "pondered what sort of greeting" was being given to her.

Then we hear the words which are said to occur 365 times in the Bible – once for each day of the year: "Do not be afraid."

When God enters our life it's normal to feel some fear because of our inadequacy, our littleness.

But this is precisely what God loves about us. That's how he created us.

Mary believes that God can do anything, but she wonders how he will fulfill the angel's words that she will be with child since she is a virgin.

And yet God deliberately chose a humble, ordinary, obscure virgin in order that his power might shine even more brightly through human weakness and littleness, and to make it clear that "nothing will be impossible for God."

Cooperating with the fullness of grace God had showered upon her at her conception, Mary was completely open to God's will, God's plan.

"Let it be done unto me according to your word."

"And the Word was made flesh and pitched his tent among us."

God's promise to King David and to the people of Israel is fulfilled. But that's not the end of the story.

Jesus chose very human and ordinary men to continue his ministry, and he chooses you and me as well.

We can never use our humanity, our weakness, our littleness as an excuse for saying "no" to God.

As St. Paul reminds us: It is God alone who strengthens us so that the glory might belong to God alone.

We are on the very brink of the celebration of the Christmas mystery.

The Child of the Virgin, the Child who is the Son of God, the Child who is our Savior, calls us to proclaim his birth, to give glory to God, and to place our lives at the service of his kingdom which is established forever.