

## Homily for Fourth Sunday of Advent

Gospel: *Luke 1:26-38*

Homilist: Deacon Rick Moser

December 24, 2017

(This is the basis of my homily but hardly all that was said)

The liturgy for every Mass begins with a short verse from the Bible, called the "**entrance antiphon.**"

- That is the verse we sing here at St. Anthony's before the entrance hymn.
- The antiphon verse can be substituted by a **hymn**, but in the official liturgical books, every Mass begins with an entrance antiphon.
- This has been the practice since the 432 AD
- The antiphon often announces the theme of the Mass
- The very first word in last Sunday's antiphon, for the Third Sunday of Advent, in Latin, is "Gaudete."
- The third Sunday of Advent has been called "Gaudete Sunday" ever since the time of Pope St Gregory the Great, in the sixth century
- The word "gaudete" is Latin for "rejoice"
- The first two words for today are: "Rorate Caeli" which means "Drop down dew from above, you heavens."

Today's Gospel is St. Luke's account of the Annunciation!

The rest of the antiphon is "and let the clouds rain down the Just One; let the earth be opened and bring forth a Savior."

What a perfect antiphon for the Annunciation and for the Nativity tomorrow.

The Annunciation itself was the greatest event in the history of God's Creation and now we will add to it the Nativity of Jesus Christ, God and Man, our Savior.

Why is the season called the "Season of Joy?"

Why do we rejoice at Christmas?

We "Rejoice" because Christmas is a great source of "Joy"

Next question - what is Joy?

Joy is the deep **satisfaction** experienced whenever we come into possession of something **good**, especially the highest good. Jesus is the source of the Highest Good, Jesus is the Highest Good. If God the Father could give us a better gift, He would; but, He can't!

**And Jesus is coming.**

- ★ **Jesus is coming** to **Save** us! He came 2000 years ago and He is coming again. He promised that evil will not have the last word.
- ★ **Jesus is coming** to **show** us again and again, How much God loves us.
- ★ **Jesus is coming** to **teach** us the art of living and the art of loving.
- ★ **Jesus is coming** to **sanctify** us and to make us partakers of the divine nature.
- ★ **Jesus is coming** to **give** us the Peace that cannot be taken away.
- ★ **Jesus is coming** to give us a Joy that cannot be taken away.

How do we find that Joy, that Love, that Peace, that can never be taken away?

- ★ Where is it?

- ★ It's right here!
- ★ It's in our hearts and in our minds
- ★ It's in the very souls.
- ★ How do we find it?
- ★ We find it in the Silence of our Hearts, the Silence of our Minds!
- ★ Jesus is present in us, He remains in, unless we sin seriously.
- ★ We speak with Him in our silence
- ★ We can hear Him in our silence
- ★ We do not need to use words.
- ★ Did Mary need words when loved Jesus when He was in her womb?

We find Jesus in our poverty

- ★ The greatest of the poor is God, who lives only in love.
- ★ We find Jesus in our suffering
- ★ We find Jesus when all is dark around us.
- ★ What do we sing at Christmas?
- ★ Silence, darkness, heart, "Silent Night, Holy Night"
- ★ You can always find God in the Silence.
- ★ Hurt, lonely, sick, torture, upset, etc.
- ★ Speaking of finding God in torture and loss:

I remember early In 1965: We were midway through our monthly retreat at the Marianist Novitiate in Santa Cruz, California. We were assembling in chapel for our final talk of the day. Either the Novice Master or the chaplain always gave the retreat talks. But, now, here in front of us stood a very large Native American in the dress blues of a U.S. Marine Corps officer. "Why is he here?" was written on everyone's face. The Novice Master introduced him to us but his name has long slipped from my memory. I do remember that he was a Colonel and a jet pilot. Little did I know then that I would be wearing a similar uniform before the year was over, instead of a Marianist habit.

Our surprise guest began to tell us about the Korean War and how he had been shot down, then captured by the North Korean Communists. He said he spent the rest of the war in a POW camp with many others from various branches of the armed forces. He spoke in detail about the treatment he and the others had received. He explained that they had all been physically tortured and brainwashed but that the officers received the worst treatment. He said the enemy believed the officers had more vital information and that if they "broke," their confessions had greater propaganda value. He assured us that he had gotten the worse treatment in his camp. The Colonel explained that the Korean War was the first war in which American POWs had encountered brainwashing. He further explained that many POWs had died in the camps with no apparent causes of death. The Colonel continued by saying that after the war and much study it was determined that these soldiers had simply given up their wills to live. If that wasn't baffling enough, it seemed most of the Marine POWs had survived. The military later determined that the rigors of Marine training inadvertently prepared them for this. A few years later, Dr. Viktor Frankl outlined much of this in his theory called "logotherapy" which he derived from his own experiences in surviving the German concentration camps. According to Frankl, those, who had a strong reason to live, survived much longer than those without a strong reason. This reason could be the desire to see family and friends, faith in God or even a desire for revenge. But, it seems that a healthy religious attitude was very beneficial to survival.

The Colonel described the many weeks he survived in the bottom of a small, cold, damp, hole in the ground even though he was badly injured and starving. He told us that he had fashioned a rudimentary rosary by tying knots on a string. He explained that his faith in Jesus and

Mary, and his ability to pray when everything else was taken away from him, kept him alive.

His ordeal reminds me of Cardinal Francis-Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan who spend 11 years in a Vietnamese Prison, 9 years in solitary years in solitary confinement. The cardinal had secretly offered Mass with only a breadcrumb and a cap of smuggled wine.

So, this Marine Officer's years of military training, flight training and many years of service, including his being shot down over North Korea and surviving a torturous POW camp, led him to Santa Cruz in 1965 to leave us with the simple message that life has meaning as long as you have faith and hope in Jesus and Mary. All else can be taken away from us, but few knots in a string can give it all back.

Two weeks ago, I received the Precious Blood during morning Mass. As I swallowed, I felt it going down my throat. I was struck with the thought that Jesus' blood was flowing through my veins; that Jesus' blood was flowing through my heart. I thought, "how closer could I be to Him; how much more intimate could we be," and then I thought, "How many other opportunities like this have I passed by?"

I have always found Jesus more often in the dark, in the silence, in the poverty of my existence and especially in the pain of hurt, loss and sickness.

Always remember that Jesus is with us wherever we are.