

Fourth Sunday of Advent (C)

- Dec 19, 2021

Isn't it **amazing** that the prophet Micah, who lived more than 700 years before Christ, predicted where the Messiah would be born, in **Bethlehem**?

And isn't it amazing that **700 years later**, Mary and Joseph were required by the **Roman authorities** to go to Bethlehem to register for a census **at the very time** that Mary was due to give birth?

One of the **many lessons** God teaches us through the great event of **Christmas** is the **power of his Providence**.

He **guides the course of history**, wisely and gently, but powerfully and securely, without violating human freedom.

This is why the prophet Micah tells us in today's First Reading that the Messiah, the Christ, will "**be our peace**."

- When we come to **know** Jesus Christ, his person, his message, and his mission, we come to **understand** and **trust** God's Providence.
- Even though sin has turned this fallen world into a valley of **suffering and tears**,
- where evil often seems to be **victorious** of good and injustice often seems to **triumph** over justice,
- when we look at the **baby Jesus** lying in the manger on the first Christmas, our hearts are **strengthened** and our **hope** in God is **confirmed**.

God is at work in the world, slowly setting things right.

God was present in a stable-cave at Bethlehem, an **obscure** little town far away from the **headlines** of ancient times.

And he is present and active in **all the little Bethlehems** of the world today:

- in your heart and mine,
- in our homes and families,
- in our hospitals and on our battlefields.

The Good Shepherd is there, **gently guiding** the course of history, leading his children to the **green pastures** of true wisdom, lasting joy, and eternal life.

Knowing this brings **interior peace**, even amidst the **exterior storms**.

Today the Church **reminds** us that Jesus truly is the **Lord of history**, that God's Providence is **powerful enough** to guide the course of world events, and to bring **meaning and order** to the struggles and sufferings of our own lives.

This loving and wise omnipotence of God, revealed by the **babe in Bethlehem**, is meant to be the source of our **interior peace**, a peace that goes **deeper** than the stormy circumstances all around us.

If we **put our faith** in this message, like Mary in today's Gospel, we too will be called **blessed**.

But there is **another part** to God's Providence.

- Mary didn't just **believe** in God's promise; she **acted** on her belief.
- She said **yes** to God's invitation; she **put her life** in his hands.
- In fact, her yes was the **full expression** of her faith.

During this week before Christmas, **we too** have a chance to give our faith in God its **full expression**.

Amidst all the **hustle and bustle** of these holy days, God's Providence will invite us not only to **enjoy** his grace and peace, but to **spread** it, to be **visible signs** – living billboards – of his **goodness**:

- whether by how we **treat** the shopping clerks,
- or by how we **behave** at the office Christmas party,
- or by the **patience** we show to our visiting relatives,
- or by taking time to **reach out** to the less fortunate,
- or by inviting the **lonely neighbor** to come over for a cup of warm eggnog, or to join us at **Midnight Mass**.

God's Providence guides the course of history, but he doesn't want his children to just be spectators - he invites us to be active partners in his work of everlasting peace.

As we continue with this Mass, let's make our heavenly Father smile by accepting that invitation.