

## Advent 4B

Mary plays a pivotal role in God's design for our salvation. We've just heard in the Gospel today the story of the Annunciation. Since God the Son is to become man, He opts to be conceived, born and nurtured like every other mortal. He identified wholly with the human condition and that includes all the 'not so nice bits' like rejection suffering and death.

God so respects human freedom that he first seeks Mary's consent before He proceeds with His plan. He also seeks our co-operation before he can work in and through us. Christianity is a divine-human partnership.

From the Angel's standpoint there is no arm-twisting going on to force Mary's hand. Spirituality is about our free choices dovetailing with God's overall plan for us. Our 'yes' to God, like Mary's, must, however, be wholehearted.

Mary saying yes to God, however, didn't imply that all was going to be plain sailing from a human point of view. Even though the Angel addressed her as one highly favoured, it didn't follow that her faith would not be tested. The circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus prove this point. It's hard to believe that Mary was left to give birth to Jesus in a miserable cave where animals sheltered. But God's ways are not our ways. If we were giving Mary advice we would probably have strongly advised her not to leave Nazareth in the first place, telling her in her state it would be insane to set out on such a hazardous journey to Bethlehem. Caesar and his census could wait. But God had different ideas. He knew by allowing His Son to be born in abject circumstances it would be a blow to human pride as the Holy Father said recently.

Mary said in her *magnificat* prayer 'he has routed the proud of heart'. The Christmas message of peace and goodwill can only find a home in the hearts of humble people who only do what

pleases God even in complex situations. For instance God allowed the tyrant King Herod to bring Mary and Joseph a lot of grief when he sought to end the life of their new-born, but with God on their side they completely outfox the wicked King. It's the same with us. God will turn everything to the advantage of those who love Him even when things initially don't turn out as we would have liked. He can 'write straight on crooked lines' as he did for Mary and Joseph.

So Mary's 'yes' to God was never diluted from the day she first uttered it to the Angel to when she stood by the cross of her dying Son.

*She will accompany us on our journey through life as well if we let her. She will be with us in our joys and sorrows and help us to do God's will in good times and bad.*