

Advent

December 18, 2011

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

My husband turns fifty this year, and his family traditionally expects a giant surprise party when each of the eleven siblings hits the big 5-0. However, I've already informed my in-laws that 1) my husband doesn't want a party and 2) I exhausted my party-planning abilities on our wedding reception: "I'll be incapable of throwing any more parties until 2075." After all, while the moment everyone jumps out and yells "Surprise!" is terrific, it takes a heck of a lot of coordination, work, and careful—often sneaky!—planning to get there.

I sometimes wonder if the angel Gabriel was accompanied by a heavenly chorus of angels shouting "Surprise!" to Mary. How shocked she must have been at this unexpected announcement. The Gospel tells us she was "greatly troubled"—she must have been confused and very afraid, not only at being chosen for such a profound mission, but also at the prospect of being an unmarried pregnant woman in a society that stoned such women to death.

Yet behind this "Surprise!" was God's magnificent plan. The surprise was on Mary and on us—that God would dare to become human to bring salvation to all people. Despite her initial shock and fear, Mary was open enough to trust God's plan and speak the *yes* that transformed the world.

Our preparations for this Great Surprise (better known as Christmas) are ending soon, yet we know the divine plan continues to unfold. God no doubt has plans to surprise us—with comfort in our pain, with a challenge for our growth, with a mission for us to undertake. Will we be open enough to say *yes* like Mary? And how might our *yes* transform ourselves, others, or even the world?



JANEL ESKER

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Today's Readings

2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16
 Rom 16:25-27
 Lk 1:26-38

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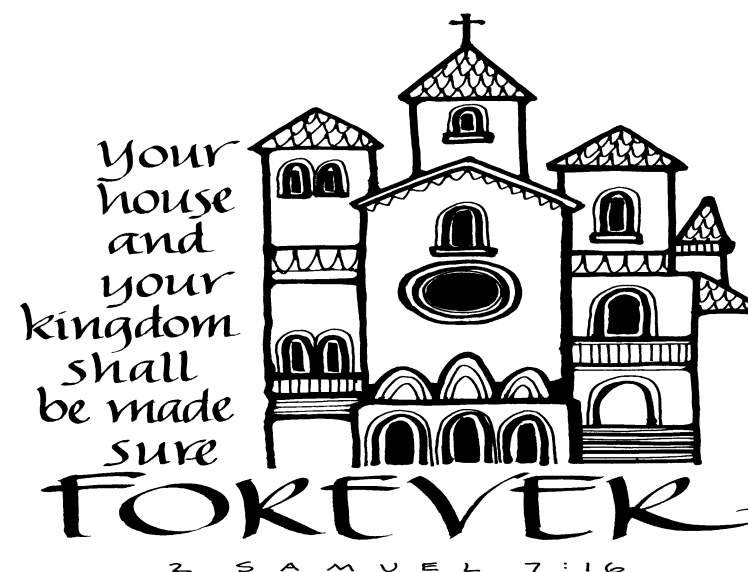
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Principal: Mrs. Terri Haynal

December 18, 2011

4th Sunday in Advent



Sunday Mass Times

Saturday - 7:30 pm
 Sunday - 10:00am

Weekday Mass Times

Tuesday & Thursday 12:10pm
 Wed. & Fri. - see bulletin

Sacrament of Reconciliation

6:30 - 7:00 pm Saturday or
 by appointment.