

DECEMBER 24, 2017



FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT



2 SAMUEL 7:1-5, 8B-12, 14A, 16

PSALM 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29

ROMANS 16:25-27

LUKE 1:26-38

REFLECTION

The Gospel tells us of one of the most powerful demonstrations of faith that we might find in Scripture. Mary's yes to God is not just a passive acceptance but an active partnership in our salvation. Imagine how she must have felt at that moment. Not only was she being told that she would have a child; she was being told she would be the Mother of God. Talk about pressure! I think I'd get nervous if I were told that I'd have to be God's second cousin! But how does Mary respond? She says, "I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). Not only is she calm in the face of such a pronouncement, she understands and undertakes the burden that is placed in front of her. Perhaps most amazingly of all, Mary sees this request as an opportunity and a blessing. Her soul proclaims the greatness of God—she recognizes that the chance to serve the Lord is an incredible gift. Sometimes, we may struggle to see God's call to us in the same way that Mary saw it. We might think of our calling as something we have to "accept," rather than something we should want for ourselves. But that thinking comes when we forget that God loves us and wants what is best for us. God's call is not meant to make us unhappy! There's a famous saying: "Find what you love to do, and you'll never work another day in your life." God's call isn't meant to come between us and that idea!

ACTION

Think about your life. How do you act toward others in your class? Your parents or siblings? Your teachers? Here's an exercise to try for one day (or a whole week if you are adventurous). Every time you interact with someone, imagine that God is pointing to that person and saying, "That is me. Please accept me, understand me, and show me compassion." Try that in the morning when you get ready for school, and when you sit in class. Try that when you are with your friends at lunch, and with your family at dinner. Try that every moment of your day, and ask yourself whether you acted differently. You may be surprised to have discovered Emmanuel born in these actions.

JOURNALING QUESTIONS

- How do you feel about surrendering your own plans and desires to God's?
- How many recent moments can you think of where God was giving you an opportunity to say yes? Were they big moments or small ones? How did you respond?