

Reflection for Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 21, 2014  
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Today's Scriptures remind us that we are closer to our day of remembrance of the Savior's birth, days away from recalling anew God's incarnation here on earth, nearer to our celebration that the Creator of all was born as a human person, as one like us. How awesome this day! How unimaginable this reality! How tremendous this gift of God to all people and to us in our time!

Luke's Gospel today tells us the all-familiar Annunciation story of the visit of the angel Gabriel to ask Mary's cooperation, Mary's acceptance, to give birth to the Promised One. The Creator of all asked Mary to be the mother by whom the all-Holy One could become one of us, to give her flesh and bone, her mind and heart to the humanity of this child, who is God. Nothing could have happened without Mary's "Fiat". In deep faith and trust, despite the mystery, despite fear of rejection and lack of understanding, Mary's hope in God was greater, and she freely gave herself in surrender to God's purposes.

God always asks us for cooperation, acceptance, and, yes, surrender, that God's vision of a world of peace and joy can come to be. God always invites us, listens to our questions, graces our responses, and awaits our free, loving, yes. Our Provident God desires that we, like Mary, give our flesh and bone, our mind and heart, to the human need of all people. May we have hope great enough to let go of fear, confusion, and uncertainty, and in great freedom offer our very lives for God's Reign today!

On this date, December 21, we also traditionally anticipate Christmas as we rejoice and sing the O antiphon: *O Rising Sun, O Rising Dawn....* As we stand on the cusp of this year's celebration, we are profoundly aware of the world of change that came with Jesus' birth and the world of change we continue to need today, a world that spreads the light of love, hope, fidelity, and trust into a world we sometimes experience as fearful, anxious, empty, and selfish.

Let us for a moment join these two realities, remembering that Jesus is the Light, that Jesus came to bring light into the darkness of our world. Today we live in a world that could easily be overwhelmed by so many disturbances, doubts, and great danger. Today, with every news story, whether in the larger world, on the national scene, or in the sharing in our own families and communities, we can sometimes feel more darkness than light, more doubt and fear than hope and grace.

As we celebrate this final Advent Sunday, we are almost at the end of our preparations for the solemn feast of Christmas. Every moment, every day, we are privileged to live in this world, a world of salvation and hope, a world that is ours since the day of Mary's

“yes,” since the coming of the Savior who was promised to the chosen people of God. We celebrate these coming days knowing that our lives are deeply grounded in the life and teachings of Jesus, that we are faithful followers of the “Way,” joining multitudes of children, women, and men who have made this same journey of witness and service through all the ages that have preceded our own.

May we always seek to live as Jesus lived, to love as God loves, to serve as believers in the Reign of God! May we continually give ourselves to the God who came and who invites us to bring Jesus to birth in today’s world! May we remember that “... all of [us] are children of light.” [1 Thessalonians 5:5]