

4TH SUNDAY IN ADVENT -- Year of Mark

1. We have a deep-seated need to feel in control of our life
 - a. difficult to celebrate and enjoy the gifts and surprises of nature and other people
 - b. try to mold life and relationships around our own limited visions
 - c. God every so often reminds us to let Him be in control since he is the author of the universe
2. see this in story of King David
 - a. powerful king, having united the 12 tribes into one nation
 - b. proud of his accomplishments, now it is time to take care of God
 - c. having created strong country, needs powerful symbol, glorious temple for God
 - i. the ark which represented God should not be traveling around in a tent, not seemly
 - d. prophet Nathan agrees
 - e. Has a vision, God gives message for David
 - i. Do not be so arrogant to think I need you to build a house for me
 - ii. I who took you as a shepherd by from the pasture and made you a great king able to conquer your enemies
 - iii. Instead of you building a house for me, I will make a house of you
 1. from you shall come a line of Kings, a dynasty to last forever
3. Challenge of faith is allowing God to be in charge
 - a. difficult to simply be thankful to God and rejoice in his love
 - b. we think we need to earn his love by doing good works
 - c. we begin to make life a duty and take the joy out of life
4. a simple gift of God is the awareness of the rhythms and cycles of nature and life
 - a. part of that rhythm is the need for rest not just each day but for a full day each week
 - b. commandment to keep Sabbath holy is invitation to relax and enjoy fruits of our work each week
 - i. invites us to imitate him by enjoying our creative work just as God enjoys his work
 - c. instead we look at the command as duty that we find excuses to avoid
 - i. we decide instead that we would rather work without a break
 1. our work is too important to take a break
5. another gift is opportunity to come together and celebrate God's love in the Eucharist

- a. he offers us His Body and Blood to bring us together and become one family
 - b. instead of rejoicing in the gifts of being a renewed family through song, word and sacred food, we make it a burden
 - i. instead of celebrating God's love together, we look for excuses to stay away from each other
6. Christmas is God's ultimate gift to us: gives himself to us by becoming one of us
- a. We celebrate great wonders beyond not just our capabilities but our imagination
 - b. Chooses young virgin and asks her to become mother of savior, the king in line of David
 - c. How? Without any human intervention whether biological or technological she will conceive a child
 - i. Sign of this wondrous power of God is kinswoman Elizabeth, thought to be too old for a child, now in 6th month of pregnancy
 - d. Incarnation of Jesus is a gift of God's love we do not deserve
 - i. He does not expect us to try to earn His love
 - ii. All he wants from us is what asked of Mary, to say yes to him and enjoy his gift.
 - iii. God chooses us as we are with our inner doubts and fears
 - iv. Knows even that we fail in our love and do things that harm our relationships
 - e. Christmas is promise of God, that even if everyone else gives up on us, He still loves us
 - f. He may even give us the power to do great things in His name
 - g. To do this we must let go of our need to control our life in our own limited vision
 - h. Instead God wants us to enjoy his gifts and allow him to guide us into the unknown future
 - i. Instead of being afraid of the unknown God wants us to enjoy the ride that he will give us in life.