

4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT, CYCLE B

2 Samuel 7: 1-5, 8-11, 16 + Psalm 89 + Romans 16: 25-27 + Luke 1: 26-38

December 18, 2011

King David is sitting in the splendor of his own palace.

The Ark of the Covenant, that sign of God's presence with His people, is housed in a tent.

So, King David decides to build a fitting house, a temple, for the Lord God.

But God has another plan, a much better plan.

God promises to build an everlasting house, a *dynasty*, for David.

In the text, there is a play here on the Hebrew word, *bayit*,

which can mean either house or dynasty.

God builds a house for David by establishing an everlasting covenant with David, a kingdom that will never end.

The mystery of this plan is later gradually revealed through the prophetic writings and then more fully in the Incarnation of Jesus, Son of David.

Joseph, who is a direct descendant of King David; Joseph, who is of the house of David, is betrothed to the Virgin Mary, who will give birth to the King of Kings.

The angel Gabriel reveals to Mary the destiny of this child:

*"...the Lord God will give him the **throne of David his father**... and of his kingdom there will be no end."*

King David thinks some-thing--a beautiful temple--is most important to God, but for God, **the human person is always of much greater value** than any one thing.

That is why the Son of God comes into the world as a descendant of David, as part of David's dynasty, so that God can be at home with humankind, love humankind, give himself to humankind, save humankind from the inside out.

By the gift of Jesus' life, God comes as close as God can to God's people, pitching his tent among us, dwelling with us in all things human, even the darkness of death.

This descendant of King David will reign from the wood of the cross.

In Jesus Christ, who is of the house of David, God dwells in human flesh, has made the human body his home, his temple.

By the gift of the Spirit of the Crucified and Risen Christ,

God chooses to make His home within us, to make us His temples, His dwelling place.

So that wherever we may be, God can be present there.

The living presence of God, the divine life shared by Christ with us through the power of the Spirit, is not limited to golden ciboriums or chalices or tabernacles or beautiful buildings.

In the obedience of faith, we carry God with us.

So that wherever humankind can be, God can be present there.

The **building of our new church** has always been about more than just brick and mortar. The sacrifices made over the years as we have slowly moved forward on this project have had the effect of strengthening this community of faith, this living temple of God's presence.

The **journey** of faith has been the most important part of this whole project: the **process** of parishioners coming together to dream about who we can be as a community of faith, the process of people getting to know each other better and making sacrifices for the good of others, sacrifices that will benefit future generations who they will never even know.

Because the life of the Son of David courses through our veins, we know that God is faithful to his promise to David, and to us. Because we have been filled with the life of Christ in baptism, a life nourished and strengthened at every celebration of the Eucharist. God has made his home with us in Christ and within us by the gift of the Spirit, so we can have **hearts of hospitality**, hearts open to welcome others into this life we have been given to share.

That's why the New Church prayer, which we have been praying for 7 years, is about more than just building a building.

It's about what happens to people of faith who come together in a building, who are the living-stones of the Church.

It's about being awakened by the Spirit to the promise of the kingdom, where ***"strangers are welcome, the broken are healed and the poor are protected."***

Finding room in the home of our lives to welcome strangers from other lands—this is what builds up the Church and strengthens the foundation of this community of faith.

Making room in the busyness of our lives to bring healing and hope to those who are broken by sickness or despair is one way to raise up and strengthen God's church.

Expanding the home of our heart to include the least ones, so that those who are poor find protection from the injustices of life, are fed with bread and kept warm from the cold, with their dignity as temples of the living God respected and protected.

Christ Jesus, who has made his home with us and within us, works through us to bring others into the arms of God, into the house of God, where all are welcomed and loved.

During its half-century of existence, this community of faith has wrestled with its identity.

The people of St. Eugene have struggled to feel good about themselves as they have compared themselves to their mother church, Christ the King, which has many resources at its disposal, or compared their parish to a mega-church like St. John's in Edmond,

Our beautiful new church building points to the beauty and goodness of the people of St. Eugene, is an outward sign of the great giftedness of this community, of the rich diversity that is evidence of God's creative presence in this place. But we still have a ways to go---conversion is never-ending, both as individuals and as a community of faith we are called to grow.

One challenge is to stop thinking and speaking about 2 communities here—Anglo and Hispanic.

There is only **one community** of faith here, one parish made up of many people of many different backgrounds. There are not Anglo and Hispanic parishioners—there are only parishioners of St. Eugene Parish.

This past Monday night during the fiesta in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe, when a mentally ill man damaged some things in our church building, a number of our parishioners of Hispanic descent told me how ashamed they were and how they felt responsible, because the man who did this deed is of Hispanic descent.

My response:

“This man is not ‘yours’ and you are not to blame for his actions.

He is a parishioner of St. Eugene, a member of the living Body of Christ—that is his deepest identity.

He is suffering from mental illness, which is a human condition, not an Anglo thing or Hispanic thing, and he and his family need our prayers and help.”

This tragic event happened toward the end of the celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and I have had a strong sense from that moment and throughout this week that the Blessed Mother has been bringing good out of this tragic event.

As the Blessed Virgin Mary some 500 years ago brought together
the Spaniards and the Aztec into unity with her Son,
so she longs to bring people today who are from different worlds together in her Son,
to reconcile the world to God.

To say to all of us---brown and white and black and yellow—
you are my children, and I am your mother.

Our Lady of Guadalupe says to us---English Speaking and Spanish Speaking
and Vietnamese Speaking and to those who speak all sorts of African dialects---
since I am your mother, you are brothers and sisters.

Love one another.

I saw evidence of our Blessed Mother at work this past Monday night,
as parishioners went to work cleaning up this house of God.
Working side by side. brown and white skinned, with determination and dedication,
hearts full of sorrow yet hearts overflowing with faith,
they re-consecrated this holy place by the work of their hands.
Because with God, nothing is impossible.

The Son of God, born of a virgin---impossible, right?

The Son of God present in blessed bread and wine—how is that possible?

The Son of God, born in us to work through us—can that really be possible?

Yet with the God of David, the God of Jesus Christ, all things are possible.

It is possible to see beyond what makes us different from one another
and to see what unites us, to see that we share the same face,
to see the face of Christ shining forth in the faces of others.