

OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA, WEYMOUTH
HOMILY FOR THE 4th SUNDAY IN ADVENT (B)
21st DECEMBER 2014

The good news from St. Paul today is that “Jesus Christ is the revelation of a mystery.”

A mystery can be a puzzle to be solved as in a crossword, or it can be our ongoing search for meaning and purpose in our lives.

For St. Paul it was the search for meaning.

Christmas can trigger this search in many people. While the Christmas story speaks of peace and love and giving, they see only conflict and misery. There’s an inconsistency between the message and the reality. That’s the mystery that thinking and praying Christians confront.

We cannot make sense of life; we need God to help us.

St. Paul confidently declares that Jesus is God’s answer to our prayer for understanding.

One reason for being confused about the meaning of life is to have unrealistic expectations. Jesus, by revealing the nature of God and showing us how God loves us, helps us to have more realistic expectations of God.

In our Gospel Mary gives us a lesson in how to avoid unrealistic expectations.

It is the story of Mary finding out that she is to be the mother of Jesus.

Notice how God acts and she responds

First, God takes the initiative.

God chooses Mary and sends his message to her.

She listens prayerfully and avoids the mistake of hearing what she wants to hear from God.

She hears what God is really saying to her

Secondly, although she was disturbed because the message was so totally unexpected and required her to what was naturally impossible and socially unacceptable, she did not argue with God.

She asked for explanation, which Gabriel gave her, but she did not question God’s plan.

Finally, having understood what God wanted her to do, she accepted the “way the eternal God wants things to be”.

She accepted the challenge.

Avoiding God’s challenge leads to frustration in life. The solution is to pray with Mary, “let what you have said be done to me.”

She does not know all the answers but she knows enough.

She will not be disappointed because she is being realistic about God.

With such faith she was willing to do something totally unexpected. No girl in her position would have expected God to make her a mother before she was married or to have a child that was not her husband’s.

She was willing to abandon her own expectations and let God be God in his own way.

Pope Francis wants us to do the same when told us to have the courage to build God’s city, even if it means abandoning our preconceived ideas about it.

Every baby reminds us of this.

In spite of family planning babies still come unexpectedly or not at all, and when they grow up they often surprise us by the way of life that they choose.

Yes, we might have to think and do things very differently in future, but, if we think as God thinks and love as God loves, life will be less of a mystery.

Jesus Christ is the revelation of the mystery.

“May God overtake us with the saving power of new expectation.” (Fr. Giambone O.P.)

Rev Geoffrey Carey