

OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA, WEYMOUTH
HOMILY FOR THE 4th SUNDAY IN ADVENT (A)
20TH DECEMBER 2015

“Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.”

Today, the last Sunday before Christmas, the focus of our readings turns from John the Baptist to Mary, not the glorious queen of heaven, but the young expectant, first-time mother.

Such women have a unique insight into what it means to be expectant. They know things I cannot even imagine.

Why should I want to imagine? Because our readings for Advent stress the spiritual importance of being expectant

Expectancy is at the heart of Advent.

Advent means more than waiting; it means expecting – looking forward to the happening of something vitally important, like the birth of a baby.

Being expectant means that we know what we are waiting for.

Otherwise we may miss that for which we wait – God with us.

This state of being expectant is important in life. It gives us something to live for. It gives hope and direction to aimless lives.

The expectant Mary has much to tell us.

She tells us that in our spiritual preparation for Christmas it's worth reflecting on our expectations.

What are we expectant for?

Some are expectant of achieving their financial targets, making more and having more.

Others under the influence of the media and of Facebook expect to be popular with their peers and even to become celebrities.

At Christmas many are expectant that their families will be united and relationships strengthened.

Mary was simply expectant with child.

This word “expectant” implies that what is expected will satisfy our desires so completely that we will not have the same desire again.

There is finality in the achievement of what is expected, but expectation can be disappointed if it is unworthy or unrealistic or too costly to ourselves, our family and friends and to our society and environment.

Mary shows us a way to avoid disappointment.

She believed that “the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.”

The only expectations that will be completely fulfilled are those promised by the Lord.

“They lack nothing, those who revere him.” (Psalm33:10)

Are our expectations worthy of the Lord? How can we tell?

Pope Francis offers an answer by asking us to focus on mercy, now and in the coming year.

How can mercy help?

Mercy will help us not to damage ourselves by overworking, our relationships by ignoring the needs of the people with whom we live and work, nor our society and environment by using them for our own pleasure and profit.

Jesus warned us: What does it profit a person if they lose their soul?

Mercy will help us to keep a healthy and happy balance.

Mercy will help us to have realistic and worthy expectations.

Mercy will make us more patient and understanding.

Mercy will give us peace.

Expectant mothers, like Mary, are models of mercy.

So as this Advent ends and I review my expectations I am going to pray for an increase in mercy, because I think that this will go a long way to avoid the damage that can be done by unmerciful ambition.

I pray I may be a channel of mercy, spreading out into the parish and beyond, fulfilling the promise made to Mary by the Lord.

I pray that you will help me.

Rev Geoffrey Carey