

THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

December 20, 2020

Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7: 1-5; 8b-12, 14a, 16 † Romans 16:25-27 † Luke 1:26-38

Reflection by: Sister Barbara Moore, OP

“Mary, Did You Know?”

Whenever I hear the song “Mary, Did You Know?” the question invites me to a quiet wondering. What did Mary “know”? As a Hebrew maiden she would likely have knowledge of the promise of a messiah. I wonder, as she pondered her “yes,” if passages woven through the Hebrew Scriptures passed through her bewildered mind?



The Annunciation by Henry O. Tanner

The prophet Nathan, in our first reading, brings to David a promise from the Lord. It is Solomon, his son who will build a house for the Lord and establish a royal throne: “Your house and your kingdom shall be firmly established; forever” (2 Sam:13.16). We here are reminded of God’s unconditional promise for an “anointed one,” a Messiah. God does not ask; the directive is clear.

You will conceive, and bear a son and his name shall be great,
and the Lord will give him the throne of David his father
and his Kingdom will have no end.

In Tanner’s perceptive and discerning painting of the Annunciation, we notice the bright aura of the heavenly presence to the left. It takes some time as we study the painting to notice an image of the cross within the glow of Gabriel’s presence. Perhaps Mary would have also wondered? Will these words of a suffering servant apply to her son? (Isaiah 53).

Mystified, she presented thoughtfully her situation: promised to Joseph, vowed to remain a virgin pondering, fearful, confused. Her answer was “Yes; be it done to me.”

Gabriel is known as the messenger angel. He also appears in the stories of Zechariah and Elizabeth, and of the Book of Daniel. The Spirit or Word of God comes through a messenger.

Is it not so with us? It might be a passage from Scripture or a poem, or painting; a person’s word, an event, a memory; a night sky, a tree, a reflection, a flower, a leaf. Once noticed, it can be a message that allows us at that moment to also be a “favored one.” We are invited to a greater spiritual depth through a “yes” to who we are called to be.

Mary, the young girl of no status, from the village of Nazareth, an utterly insignificant place is signaled out, called, chosen, and overshadowed with God’s Spirit. Her response moves from one of fear to total trust in God’s inscrutable designs.