



## FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Year B

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16

Psalm 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

### Gathering

*(Three deep blue unlit candles and one pink one, surrounded by seasonal greens, and a statue or picture of Mary rest on a table covered with a deep blue cloth.)*

Dwelling places come in many forms from tents to living persons. We reflect this week on Mary as a dwelling place of God. Last week we encountered John the Baptist's charge to "make straight the way of the Lord." We heard Paul call us to "Rejoice always," and "Pray without ceasing." What was your Advent prayer like this past week?

### Prayer

*(The candles are lit. The leader calls the community to prayerful attention to God's presence within and among them. A selection of instrumental music is played. When the music is complete, members pray in two groups.)*

I:           The promises of the Lord I will sing forever;  
              through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your

faithfulness.

For you have said, “My kindness is established forever”;  
in heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness.

II: “I have made a covenant with my chosen one,  
I have sworn to David my servant:  
forever will I confirm your posterity  
and establish your throne for all generations.”

All: Forever will I sing the goodness of the Lord.

Psalm 89:2-3, 4-5

## HEARING THE LORD’S GOSPEL

*(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the proclamation of the gospel, the leader invites members to name a word or phrase from the gospel that stays with them, but without any additional comment. Some may repeat what another has already said.)*

*When this naming is complete, the leader passes out copies of the scriptures of the week as needed. The leader then poses these questions: “What draws you to this gospel?” “Where do you resist this gospel?” The community pauses for a time of silent reflection. After about a minute, the leader invites members to consider the Reflection and Questions for the week. After a time for silent reflection, the leader invites members to re-arrange themselves in groups of three or four for sharing. The small groups move off so as not to intrude on one another.)*

## Reflection

While not many of us live in tents, but rather in houses, the structure of a tent has a certain advantage of flexibility to it. It can be easily enlarged or condensed by moving the tent poles. Advent is a time when we prepare our hearts to receive Christ more fully, and a time when we prepare our houses to receive guests. We open up our living spaces not only for guests, but for Christmas trees and crèches and decorations of all kinds.. The deepest meaning of this preparing ourselves to be receptive to all kinds of relatives and acquaintances is found in the reception we give to the Christ who yearns to dwell more fully in our lives.

In the first reading, David is taken with the contrast between his dwelling in a palace of cedar while the ark of God, the Ark of the Covenant, dwells in a humble tent. But the Lord chides David, saying, in effect, “You presume to build a house for me? It is I who will make you a house.” True royalty will come with an heir from his line and his everlasting kingdom. In the relationship between God and humankind, the initiative is always with God. God’s faithfulness endures even in humble surroundings.

Since the 16th century, Christians have honored Mary in the Litany of Loreto as *Ark of the Covenant*, *House of Gold*, *Seat of Wisdom*, *Vessel of Honor* and with many more titles. This litany acknowledges the humble Mary as the *home* and *resting place* of Jesus. Through her, God makes his *home* with us, and is revealed to the world.

Mary opens the tent of her being to welcome the life of God’s son, to care for him and give him for the life of the world. Mary models for us the welcome God seeks from us. Today, we continue to call upon her to help us to receive him fully and to welcome all people in the name of Jesus, her Son.

### Questions for Reflection and Conversation

- ◆ What do you need to do to be ready to welcome others into your home?
- ◆ Describe the feeling of being *at home*.
- ◆ How have you made your life a welcoming home for God?
- ◆ When have you opened your life to another and been surprised to find you were welcoming Christ?
- ◆ Recall a time when you were *troubled* before God, but still responded to God’s call.

### HEARING THE GOSPEL’S LORD

*(After about fifteen minutes of sharing in threes/fours, the leader re-gathers the community. Once back together, members pause for a moment. The leader then poses these questions: “What do you hear Christ saying to us in hearing and sharing his word?” “What do you want to hold on to for yourself from this session?” “How are you/we being called to live in response to God’s word?” After a pause, the leader invites the community to a time of conversation. When this sharing is complete, the community moves to a time of prayer.)*

## Response in Action Suggestions

- ♦ Serve at a homeless shelter some day this week or this season. Be in relationship with the folks you serve, engaging them in conversation about their hopes and efforts to find a home.
- ♦ Set aside twenty minutes some day this week to pray the Litany of Loreto. You can find Marian litanies at [www.udayton.edu/mary/prayers/loreto.html](http://www.udayton.edu/mary/prayers/loreto.html).
- ♦ Set aside twenty minutes some day this week for reflection and prayer. Consider where and how God may be inviting you to some new fruitfulness in your life. Let your Advent prayer this week be: "Holy Mary. Mother of God, my mother, pray for me."

## Prayer

*(After a brief pause, the gospel of the week is re-proclaimed by a member of the community. Following the proclamation, the leader poses these questions to the members: "What does Christ in his Spirit say to you now?" "What do you say to him in response?" The community pauses for a full five, perhaps even seven, minutes of prayerful attention to God. A brief instrumental selection may be played during part of this time. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two, or a brief expression that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally. The community receives this without additional comment.*

*When this sharing is complete, members join in singing, "The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came." The song may be found on the Internet. When the song is complete the prayer continues as follows. To the intercessions, members respond, "Pray for us.")*

Leader: Mary holds for us the Promised One of God and walks with us as a model of the faithful disciple of the Lord. Let us unite with Mary during these closing days of Advent.

Leader: Mary. Mother of God...

Mary, Mother of the Church...

Mary, Mother of Divine Grace...

Mary, Seat of Wisdom ...

Mary, House of Gold...

Mary, Ark of the Covenant...

Mary, Vessel of Honor...

Mary, Gate of heaven...

Mary, Health of the Sick...

Mary Comforter of the afflicted...

Mary, Queen of all saints...

Leader: God, you showed us through Mary how to be open to your word and to be a welcoming presence to your people. Give us her spirit of faith and trust that we might welcome your Son into our lives. May we recognize his presence in the many faces through whom he is revealed. In Jesus' name, we pray.

All: Amen.

*(Members exchange a sign of peace.)*