



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We have reached the Fourth Sunday in Advent, and Christmas will be upon us at the end of this week. As we look to this great celebration, I know we will all celebrate it differently this year than in other years. With the pandemic, there will be fewer people allowed into the Christmas Masses, many will not gather with extended family groups, and some have even lost loved ones throughout this year.

The Good News, though, is that the love of God is NO LESS for you and for me this year! He continues to pour out His love upon us. The Good News is that Jesus – our God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity – entered into our humanity! He took on our flesh, and He walked our walk, talked our talk, lived our life, died our death, and then rose to new and everlasting life with the Father, drawing our humanity into the Eternal Heart of the Eternal God.

This weekend's Gospel speaks of that moment of Incarnation (enfleshment) – as the Archangel Gabriel tells Mary that God has chosen her. After asking if she will have to give up her vow to God of virginity (Gabriel answers in the negative), she gives her whole and complete "YES" to God: "**Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word**" (Luke 1:38)... "**And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us**" (John 1:14). This is the beginning of our salvation! *God becomes one of us so that we can become one with God!*

During this time, we have to cover our faces ... but God covered His Divinity in human flesh.

During this time, we have to social distance ... but God made Himself distant from God on the Cross.

During this time, we might be afraid of sickness and death ... but God took on all sickness and death and took away its sting (see I Corinthians 15:55).

God has been through all of the worst of the worst and He has overcome it... for love of you and me. During this time of sickness, separation and trial, God invites us to turn our gaze upon Him. He is our HOPE! Trust in Him!

As we move through the end of the Advent Season into the Christmas Season, let us lift up our hearts to the Lord with great rejoicing! He loves you so much, and will never abandon you!

God's peace be with you.