

Homily Fourth Sunday of Advent (B) 20th December 2020

This Sunday we celebrate the fourth Sunday of Advent.

We are drawing close to Christmas. So now we focus on the events leading up to Jesus being born.

The Gospel (*Luke 1:26-38*) tells of the visit of the Angel Gabriel to Mary, to announce that she will give birth to a son and that she must name him Jesus. Traditionally this is seen as the moment Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary, nine months before His birth.

Pause in wonder at this truly awesome moment. Your salvation, my salvation, God's entire plan of salvation: they all hang by a single thread. **Will Mary say yes?** Heaven and earth hold their breath waiting for her reply.

We are so familiar with Mary's line 'I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me' (*Luke 1:38*) that we can miss the drama. **God stakes His entire plan on Mary giving her consent.**

And so we honour Mary with the two greetings she receives in the first chapter of St. Luke's Gospel:

'Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee' is Gabriel's greeting to Mary (*from Luke 1:28*).

'Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb' is Elizabeth's greeting to Mary (*from Luke 1:42*)