

Homily – Sisters of Charity of Incarnate Word

May 23, 2018

Today we listen to a prophet, an angel, and a young woman. Each plays a significant role in bringing God's word to us.

Isaiah confronts King Ahaz at a time of crisis. The prophet prophesies the birth of a child who will be called Immanuel, God is with us. In times of crisis, rapid change, and polarization the birth of a child – a new life -- is a sign of hope for the future.

The angel Gabriel goes to Nazareth in Galilee, an area scorned by Jews in Judah and Jerusalem as a less than faithful Jewish outpost. The angel brings tidings of great joy – filled, however, with mystery – to a young woman, a virgin, in a society that values age and childbearing. She is a woman in an environment dominated by men. She is poor with low expectations for her future. Upon hearing the angel's message, she demurs. Why has she found favor with God? Moreover, being unmarried, how can she possibly give birth without causing scandal and rejection by her family and community? The response is clear but full of surprise: God has chosen her to be the mother of the Savior, and with God all things are possible. Jesus will be conceived by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit.

This is the same Spirit who moved over the waters at the moment of creation. It is the same Spirit that God breathed into Adam's nostrils when he became a living being. Conceived by the power of the Most High, Jesus will be the Son of God, God with us.

As we identify with Mary, her story becomes our story. The angel greets us in God's name today. Gabriel tells us that God abides with us. We are precious in God's eyes, and God has called us to carry within us the Son of God by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We need to listen very attentively to what Mary says with great humility and courage: "I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Mary says Yes! to God – unlike the woman in the Garden of Eden. It will cost Mary much pain but she shows us what it means to be a faithful servant of the Lord, a true missionary disciple.

My dear Sisters, you and I are challenged today to say Yes! to whatever God wills for us. We are to incarnate the Word of God in our lives to continue Jesus' mission and ministry of proclaiming the truth of the gospel of God's enduring love for all his children. May Our Lady of Guadalupe, who is with us, always show us the way.