

Homily for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent  
December 23rd, 2018  
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Isn't it amazing that the prophet Micah, who lived more than 700 years before Christ, predicted where the Messiah would be born, in Bethlehem? And isn't it amazing that 700 years later, Mary and Joseph were required by the Roman authorities to go to Bethlehem to register for a census at the very time that Mary was due to give birth? One of the many lessons God teaches us through the great event of Christmas is the power of his Wisdom. He guides the course of history, wisely and gently, but powerfully and securely, without violating human freedom. This is why the prophet Micah tells us in today's First Reading that the Messiah, the Christ, will "be our peace." When we come to know Jesus Christ, his person, his message, and his mission, we come to understand and trust God's Wisdom. Even though sin has turned this world into a valley of suffering and tears, where evil often seems to be victorious over good and injustice often seems to triumph over justice, when we look at the baby Jesus lying in the manger on the first Christmas, our hearts are strengthened and our hope in God is confirmed. God IS at work in the world, and he is methodically setting things right. He was present in a stable at Bethlehem, an obscure little town far away from the headlines of ancient times. And he is present and active in all the little Bethlehems of the world today: your heart and mine, our homes and families, our

hospitals and on our battlefields. The Good Shepherd is there, gently guiding the course of history, leading his children to the green pastures of true wisdom, lasting joy, and eternal life. Knowing this is what brings us interior peace, even amidst the exterior storms of our lives. Each one of us has experienced God's action in our lives in some special way, at least once: Maybe through a truly uncanny coincidence, or through an answered prayer, or through the providential intervention of a friend or loved one.

I recently experienced this.... I work with a young lady who has a big job at a large Consumer Goods company. We've had the opportunity to talk over the last year and she confided to me about her struggle as a result of this big job and the unbalance it creates for her. Her marriage, her motherhood, her daughter duties and her work. I told her Camille and I would pray for her.... Now when we say we'll pray for you we really do mean it! We do it and most of the time we write it down so that we can come back to it later and write God's response next to the original prayer if we're fortunate enough to learn of it! By the way, when we pray for rain, we bring an umbrella. So, we prayed for her and we wrote the prayer in our prayer book... I then sent her the prayer in an email... the prayer simply asked God to be in charge of her life, that she seek him first in all things; to give her the wisdom to think without confusion clearly and to know how to effectively divide up her time without feeling weighted down.

We prayed that God would show her the way to prioritize her responsibilities and interests and still fulfill each role she has to the fullest especially when she feels that it is all too much: to simply trust in the Lord! That was in October of this year. On November 6<sup>th</sup> she sent me an email that read "I keep this close, thank you for taking the time to send it to me." So that night, just because... we prayed again, thanking God that she shared that with us and we asked him again to show her his will for her life. Last Monday night, our companies were together for dinner and she told me that on November 7<sup>th</sup>, she had accepted a new position. A new position with the same company but in this position, which is an even bigger job, she would not have to travel as much, she wouldn't have to move away from San Antonio, where her mom and dad live. She told me that her and her husband prayed together about this and that they were completely at peace with moving forward. She thanked me again for the prayer and I know it sounds cliché, but we had nothing to do with it! We were simply part of the wisdom of God's plan... no one else could have aligned everything that needed to be aligned, including our praying for her that night except the Almighty God.

The babe in Bethlehem truly is Almighty God, not someone we just pray to, but someone who has come to dwell among us. Today the Church reminds us that Jesus truly is the Lord of history, that God's Wisdom is powerful enough to guide the course of world events, and to bring meaning and order to the struggles and sufferings of our own lives.

This loving and wise omnipotence of God, revealed by the babe in Bethlehem, is meant to be the source of our interior peace, a peace that goes deeper than the stormy circumstances all around us. If we put our faith in this message, like Mary in today's Gospel, we too will be called blessed. But there is another part to God's Wisdom. Mary didn't just believe in God's promise; she acted on her belief. She said yes to God's invitation; she put her life in his hands. In fact, her yes was the full expression of her faith. During this week before Christmas, we too have a chance to give our faith in God its full expression. Amidst all the hustle and bustle of these holy days, God's Wisdom will invite us not only to enjoy his grace and peace, but to spread it, to be visible signs – living billboards – of his goodness: whether by how we treat the shopping clerks, or by how we behave at the office Christmas party, or by the patience we show to our visiting relatives, or by taking time to reach out to the less fortunate, or by inviting the lonely neighbor to come over for a cup of warm eggnog, or to join us at Midnight Mass. God's Wisdom guides the course of history through all generations, and his is an everlasting mercy! This Christmas recall God is not looking for spectators - he invites us to be active partners in his work of everlasting peace. As we receive the precious body of our lord today in just a few moments, let our hearts be filled with Christmas Joy and let us all make our heavenly Father smile by accepting that invitation.