



# HORIZON OF HOPE

The Fourth  
Sunday

## Son of the Most High

Luke 1:26-38

*Mary said “yes” when Gabriel announced she had been chosen to be the mother of the Savior, even though she had no real idea of what lay ahead. She was willing to accept God’s plan for her life.*

We think of the coming of Jesus as the greatest and most joyful event of history, but in this week’s Gospel, we are told that Mary was “greatly troubled” when she saw the angel. Despite her misgivings, however, Mary accepted her destiny, saying, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.”

When we hear God’s call in our lives, we may feel a bit uneasy or unprepared. Mary’s story reminds us that when we say our “yes” to God’s plan, we too will be given the strength and the courage to follow through. In these final days before Christmas, let us renew our commitment to accepting God’s plan for our lives. Let us remember Saint Paul’s admonition, “in all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thes 5:18), and rest in the words of the angel Gabriel, “nothing will be impossible for God.”



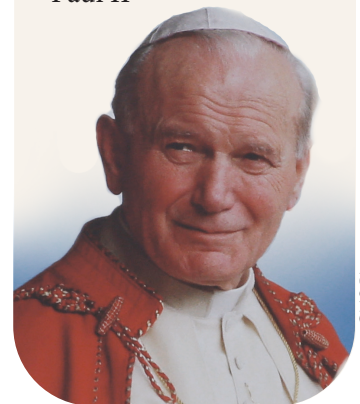
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### POINTS TO PONDER

- Is there something in my life I am resisting? How can Mary’s example help me become more accepting of God’s plan?
- What can I do this last week of Advent to prepare myself for the mystery of Christmas?
- What habits or attitudes have I developed this Advent that I would like to take with me for the rest of the year?

*“The liturgy of Advent ... helps us to understand the fullness of the value and meaning of the mystery of Christmas. It is not just about commemorating the historical event, which occurred some 2,000 years ago in a little village of Judea. Instead, we must understand that our whole life should be an ‘advent,’ in vigilant expectation of the Christ’s final coming.”*

— Pope Saint John Paul II



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## SIGNS OF THE SEASON

### The Angel Gabriel

The word “angel” means “messenger.” Angels figure prominently in the Christmas story, but only one of them is named: Gabriel. In fact, Gabriel, whose name means “God is my strength,” is one of only three angels named in the Bible (Michael and Raphael are the other two). Gabriel is present in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament he appears to the prophet Daniel, and in the New Testament he appears both to the Blessed Virgin and to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist.

### ADVENT PRAYER

#### *Come, O Lord!*

“I delight to do your will, my God; your Law is in my inner being.” — Psalm 40:9

*Mary, help us to accept God’s will for our lives, as you accepted the call to become the mother of the Savior. Bless us this holy season to live and love by following your son, Jesus.*

## FAMILY FOCUS Christmas Tree

Decorating the Christmas tree used to be a Christmas Eve activity. While that isn’t always practical, putting up a tree can still be a major celebration. As you bring out the ornaments, tell the stories behind some of the family favorites. Let each member of the family choose a favorite and hang it in a special place. When the tree is completely decorated, bless it with holy water and give thanks for family and friends, and especially for the great gift of Jesus.



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## Catechism CONNECTION

“But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons’ (*Gal 4:4-5*). This is ‘the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God’ (*Mk 1:1*): God has visited his people. He has fulfilled the promise he made to Abraham and his descendants. He acted far beyond all expectation — he has sent his own ‘beloved Son’ (*Mk 1:1*; cf. *Lk 1:55,68*).”  
— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 422



## THE NATIVITY SCENE

The first Christmas crèche was set up in a cave in Italy by St. Francis of Assisi in 1223. When people from the village came to see the manger with hay, an ox, and a donkey, St. Francis spoke to them about the newborn babe in Bethlehem. Take time during this Christmas season to visit the Christmas crèche in your parish church. Pray to the baby Jesus for your special intentions.