Earlier this week, one of my friends posted a photo of herself with her daughter whom she adopted from Central Asia 11 years ago. This was their anniversary when they first met in person…and it was love at first sight! Her daughter was about 1 or 2 years old at the time. You see, my friend had always wanted to be a parent and because of her being an “older” woman, her odd was against her to bear a child of her own. So she began weighing her options on possibly adopting a child from a foreign country. She felt that this was also a very “Christian” thing to do. After all, aren’t we all adopted to be children of God?

 As she was going through the adoption process, there was a great deal of fear and anxiety, not knowing what to expect of this new mother/daughter relationship. However, she turned her fear into hope because she sensed that this was exactly what God wanted her to do and that God will uplift this special child’s life into new life and joy.

 As adopted children of God, we certainly didn’t deserve all of this, in spite of our human sinful natures. Nevertheless, God still reached out to us and embrace us for who we are. God was willing to engage us as part of God’s plan for salvation and hope for humanity. Just as God said to Mary who was chosen to be the bearer of God’s own son, *“Do not be afraid, I am bringing you good news of great JOY for all people.”*[[1]](#footnote-1)One could only imagine what would God be up to next?

 The passage that Ruthie read for us earlier was based on Mary’s famous song the ***Magnificat*** which means “**magnified**” in Latin. It was one of the ancient Christian hymns sung by the early church to honor the virgin Mary, for her role in responding to God’s calling in her life, to be the bearer of God’s Son in her womb. But magnify what? God’s revelation to Mary illuminates not only God’s plan for this young unwedded teenage girl but also God’s plan of salvation for all of humanity.

 Considering the context and the circumstances surrounding the miraculous event that took place more than 2000 years ago, this Canticle of Mary could very well be a song of fear and anguish, but gave this unexpecting teenager credits for her courage and faith in honoring God’s chosen plan in her life, to be the bearer of God’s son here on earth. Because of her faith and obedience, Mary turned her cry of fear into a song of praise, exultation, and worship.

 ***“My soul magnifies the Lord! And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant, for the Mighty one has done great things for me, and holy is his name.”*[[2]](#footnote-2)** What a “magnificent” song of praise and a great expression of joy!

 Through the noble giving of herself, Mary testified to the rest of humanity that God was able to accomplish great things, even though many would consider this as humanly impossible. But as the angel reassured Mary that “***Nothing is impossible with God!****”* And Mary responded in faith, *"****Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word****."[[3]](#footnote-3)* **God chooses ordinary people in order to accomplish extra-ordinary tasks! And God can do the same for us.**  **God undergirds great expectations out of the unexpected and challenging circumstances!**

As the angel declared, ***"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.”***

 Over the years, many biblical scholars have analyzed this event from a sociological point-of-view. Not only what was going through Mary’s mind at that time, but more importantly what did that mean for humanity when she said “Yes” to God! This event was considered a major social breakthrough through this unwedded teenage mother-to-be because this child who was destined to “*bring down the powerful from their thrones, lift up the lowly, fill the hungry, and send the rich away empty…”[[4]](#footnote-4)* There seemed to be a lot of uncertain pieces that need to fall into place. Come to think of it, don’t we wish that we have all the answers to our questions and we got all the ducks lined up in a row? But unfortunately we don’t. This is a part of the mystery of our faith.

 This miracle child was on a God-sent mission to restore social order, political upheaval, and justice of this chaotic world. If we look at the world we live in today, we can certainly see how little or how far have we advanced over the past 2000+ years? The world we live in today is still yearning for their Savior to save us.

 Through God’s providence, the seeds of faith and courage have been planted in the wombs of this unwedded teenager so that the Messiah would be born. Even in the midst of these unusual circumstances and challenges in life, God still chose Mary in order to fulfill God’s plan for human salvation. If God did this to an unwedded teenage girl then, imagine what God can and will do in challenging each of us here in this room right now today, however old or young we may be; whether we are women or men; singles, married, divorced, or widowed; employed, seeking a new employment, or retired?

 **God’s purpose often leads to the reversal of human values, exalting the poor and dethroning the mighty. God invites us to see things from a totally different perspective, beneath the surface, and out of the ordinary. God invites us to ask “hard questions” that we’ve been avoiding to ask…perhaps we don’t want to know the truth.** God challenges us to re-think what is possible and how we might do things differently going forward, as we prepare the way for the newly kingdom to come, for the sake of God’s glory and His name. **God will turn our Fear into Hope and Joy!**

 Throughout this Advent season, we are reminded that **God invites those who rest marginally, on the fringe of society like Mary and Joseph, to be at the center of God’s salvific plan for humanity.** The light of Christ will guide God’s people from all corners of the earth, including the lowly shepherds, who were the first to come to the manger to worship the newborn king…not in some royal palace in Jerusalem but a lowly manger in a little town called Bethlehem, which means the “House of Bread”. This was the long-expected Messiah who the people had been waiting for.

 This season of Advent announces to the world, through the incarnation of the Word, a new order is about to begin. A new kingdom will soon arrive and a new reversal of order will be established with the coming Messiah.

 Behold, we’ve come to embrace that God has and is constantly doing new things amongst us through those who are oppressed, humbled and lowly. Nothing remains the same forever, except God, as God continues to open our eyes to see a broader glimpse of God’s glory on this side of heaven. Through Christ, God is offering us something that we can anchor our faith onto - himself. God promises that He would remain faithful to all those who trust in Him. God’s name shall remain magnified and be glorified once again! God alone is worthy to be praised!

 This is the heart of the message as we enter into the last week of the Advent season. We shall rejoice, anchor our hope and expectation in Christ and Christ alone, in spite of all the attentions that may persuade us away from the true meaning and purpose of the season. We shall continue to praise God by placing God where He belongs, not on the fringe or the margins of our lives, but at the center of our hearts. **Like Mary the mother-to-be, we are all impregnated with God’s promise of a new kingdom to come where the “powerful were to be brought down from their throne, the lowly be lifted up, the hungry shall be filled and the rich shall be emptied.** At the moment, it may not make much sense at all, but when all things settle and fall into proper places, God’s overall plan of salvation shall be revealed, as we patiently wait and eagerly long for in our expected Savior. **God will turn our personal fears into the hope and joy for what is to come**.

 In closing, I would like to share with you the words of a Christmas carol called “***And Jesus said: Don’t Be Afraid***” by Shirley Erena Murray. It goes like this….

***And Jesus said: Don’t be afraid –***

***I’ve come to turn your fear into hope,***

***I’ve come to take you through the deep,***

***to be your friend until the end,***

***and give you troubled hearts to sleep.***

***And Jesus said: Don’t be afraid –***

***I know your emptiness and grief,***

***I hear your words of unbelief, but if you will,***

***I’ll heal your soul and give your doubting heart relief.***

***And Jesus said: Don’t be afraid –***

***I am the Way, I am the Light,***

***I am the Truth that holds you tight,***

***and in God’s home you have a room,***

***a place of welcome and delight.***

 Friends, the waiting will soon be over. God will restore all orders in this broken world and fractured society. As the prophet Isaiah reminded us, *“The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. 7 The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. 9 They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.[[5]](#footnote-5)*

 In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Luke 2:10* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Luke 1:46-49* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Luke 1:37-38* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Luke 1:52-53* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Isaiah 11:6-9* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)