



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent 1984

“A voice cries in the wilderness.  
Prepare a way for the Lord,  
Make his paths straight.  
Every valley will be filled in,  
every mountain and hill laid low;  
winding way will be straightened,  
and rough roads make smooth.  
And all human kind shall see the salvation of God.”



In the poem from the prophet Isaiah are the beginnings of the attempt to spiritualize. No longer will God be this physical manifestation as the warrior, leader of armies, but will be a “Word” received in hearts.

“A voice cries”...”the Word” calls to all people universal. See the way...to harmony, union...joy... “A voice cries in the wilderness.” The wilderness of the human condition we heard described so well in our homily yesterday. The ambiguity of going against the wind of the Spirit, the Spirit that is ever being offered to

us; the Spirit that is openness; that gives us the strength to respond, to be responsible. “Response...able” which I like to think of in times of the “Virgin Presence.”

Remember the lines in Merton’s poem...

“But in the days...when our Theotokos  
Appears upon our mountain with her clothes like sails,  
Then , like the wise, wild baby,  
The unborn John who could not see a thing  
We wake and know the Virgin Presence:  
Receive her Christ...”

The Virgin Presence for me is the openness to respond, the fullness of which was Mary’s privilege. One author has said, in a sense, we are all “full of grace.” I thought of this when we heard the magnificent poem from Ephesians yesterday.



“Blessed be God the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ who has bless us with every spiritual blessing in heaven in Christ...Here is the ‘fullness of grace’.  
Before the world was made he chose us,  
Chose us in Christ...to be holy and spotless and live  
Through love in his presence...”  
And it is in him that we were claimed as God’s own,  
Under the predetermined plan of the one who  
Guides all things – Mary who opened the way for  
This plan.”

Remember Br. David Steindal-Rast told us, theology must become poetry if it is to be understood. The depth of the mystery is open only to the mystic. Poetry brings to a point the experiences of the past and

mediates them to the future through the narrows of the present. The present is always now with all that is, people, events, things. Living in the present is living in the Virgin Presence, the openness in faith out of which we can be response-able.”

Mary, full of grace, virgin, mother, spouse; her life was poetry. “For she pondered these things in her heart.” “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my savior. Because he looked upon his lowly handmaid.”

Mary’s Virgin Presence to the “voice that cries” – opened the way in the wilderness for the way that would transform, inspire, and renew humanity.

The poetry of her life brought to a point the experiences of the past – all the traditions of her people, and mediated them to the future.

“Yes, from this day forward all generations will call me blessed...” She mediated them through the narrows of the present.

“The narrows of the present” – “she pondered these things in her heart” – is the Virgin Presence, open to all of us...the cry in our wilderness...

“When our Theotokos---appears upon our mountain with her clothes like sails” – will I awake--? “His mercy reaches from age to age” in and through each of us.

Meister Echart says “God is continually begetting his Son in us.”

Mary, the Way, the gate, the door, the enclosure, the tomb, the center pillar of the dwelling in, are all feminine terms – symbols for renewal, inspiration, transformation, harmony, union, joy.

Can we ever conceive the Christ within, until we are aware of the Virgin Presence?

Some years ago, I used in a homily a selection from Dr. Zhivago. The doctor is meditating on his wife’s giving birth. He says “in a sense, all births are virgin births for she is alone, giving birth, as though I had nothing at all to do with it.”

In each of us is the Virgin Presence “The call of every blessing in heaven in Christ: - the openness to conceive and give birth to “her Christ” into our wilderness...the way to our response-ability to be inspired renewed, and transformed, to harmony, union, and joy.

The beautiful prayer of Teilhard de Chardin “Joy to me, Oh Lord, in the midst of the struggle, to realize that in developing myself you are increasing your hold on me.”

“A voice cries in the wilderness,  
prepare a way for the Lord...”  
“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.  
My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.  
All generations will call me blessed.  
His mercy reaches from age to age...  
To Abraham and his descendants forever.”