

Fr. Rudy's Reflections
Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 24, 2023

Hail Mary, Full of Grace

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

Think back, if you will, to childhood, when you might have been asked this timeless question that adults often ask the young: "What do you want to be when you grow up?" This question, although innocently asked, is truly profound when considering how each person's path is guided by our loving God. When asked, though, many children have a definite answer. They dream of becoming astronauts, firefighters, or doctors, even a pizza delivery person, because they envision a future shaped by their aspirations. Little do they know that God, in his divine wisdom, might have alternate plans for them—plans beyond their wildest dreams. As the poet Robert Frost has written, "I took the road less traveled by and that has made all the difference." All of us, in one way or another, have taken a somewhat diverted path from our plans, and God had a hand in it all.

As we reflect on the Gospel of Luke (1:28-39) this Fourth Sunday of Advent, we encounter the profound moment of the Annunciation. In this pivotal exchange between the angel Gabriel and Mary, we witness a young woman chosen to play a role in God's grand design. Mary, full of grace, stands as a model of humility, embracing the unknown with unwavering trust. She says, "May it be done to me according to your word." Much like the child whose dreams evolve into a reality never envisioned, Mary, in her humility, surrenders to God's plan. She embodies the essence of letting go of personal expectations and ego, making room for the divine to unfold. Her "yes" to Gabriel is a testament to her profound faith and readiness to accept a destiny that surpasses human understanding.

In a world that often values power, recognition, and control, Mary's surrender to God's will serves as a timeless lesson. She accepts the task laid before her, despite the uncertainties that lie ahead. Mary's acceptance echoes through the ages, challenging us to release our grip on self-centered desires and open ourselves to God's unknowable possibilities. Mary's journey, however, was not without challenges; societal norms and personal sacrifices awaited her. Yet, she chose to trust in the Almighty, believing that with God, all things are possible. Her story beckons us to embrace the unknown with courage, acknowledging that God can accomplish wonders through us when we acquiesce to God's divine purpose.

As we await this blessed season of Christmas, let us contemplate Mary's humility and her willingness to be an instrument of God's grace. In a world that often encourages self-promotion and control, Mary's surrender becomes a guiding light for our lives. Emulating her, may we shed the weight of our ego, trusting in God's plan even when it leads us into uncharted territory. For in surrendering to God's will, we, too, may discover a purpose beyond our imagination—a purpose that aligns with the divine tapestry of God's plan for us.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy