

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent B December 18, 2011 – Fr. Gerald Haemmerle

It is the fourth Sunday of Advent, it is the week before Christmas. Our readings today provide us with some wonderful images. In our first reading David, who was living in a grand palace, realized that the Ark of the Covenant, a symbol of God's presence among the people, was still housed in a tent. He wanted to build a grand temple for God, to house the Ark. And God, through the prophet Nathan, said "no". He(God) is the one who will build a house for David, referring to his line of descendants. But there is a deeper meaning here. From the time of Moses and the giving of the Ark of the Covenant to the people of Israel, God's presence was always seen in the tent. When the people moved through the desert, the tent moved with them. When they went to war, the tent moved with them. When they were hungry or thirsty or frustrated, the tent was there, God was there with the people. Perhaps God feared that if a temple was built, in the mind of the people his presence would be limited to it, rather than being with the people wherever they might be.

I believe that the tent is a wonderful image of Jesus, who is the presence of God in this world. On Christmas day the Son of God was born in Bethlehem, God was present in him. He grew up in Nazareth, he preached and worked miracles in Galilee, he went to Jerusalem and suffered, died, was buried and rose from the dead. He was the presence of God in the world. And he remains the presence of God in the world, in the word of God that we listened to, in the community that is gathered, in the Eucharist that we will share in a few moments. And several weeks ago he reminded us that he was present in the hungry, the thirsty, and in all of our brothers and sisters, especially those in need.

Mary is the other great image today. How she differs from David. He was the great king, he lived in Jerusalem, he thought he was in charge, he was going to do something great for God. Mary was a young girl, living in a backward town, and instead of doing something great for God she allowed God to do something great for her. She said "yes" to God and in so doing she became the dwelling place for God, the tent for God, the temple of God. She carried this child in her womb for nine months, and today she is ready to give birth to the Son of God.

That is the image we need to hold on to this week. I hear from so many people how hectic things have been. Since Black Friday people have been shopping, sending Christmas cards, attending pageants and parties and decorating. I hope that this week we can slow down a bit, quiet down, and begin to enjoy the true meaning of the Christmas season. I suggest that we invite Mary to accompany us this week, I suggest that we invite Jesus to accompany us, I suggest that he is the tent of God, the presence of God in our lives.