

**Homily – Fourth Sunday of Advent  
Mass and Groundbreaking at St. Brigid – December 22, 2024**

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus; on this Fourth Sunday of Advent – as we stand at the threshold of Christmas – the prophet Micah directs our gaze to the humble village of Bethlehem: *“You, Bethlehem-Ephrathah too small to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel.”* From a place of littleness comes the greatest gift of all: Jesus Christ, our Lord and Shepherd. This paradox – where small becomes great – is at the heart of God’s plan. God often chooses what is small, humble, and overlooked to bring about his salvation.

This is the mystery of Advent and the meaning of Christmas: God meets us in the most unexpected ways. In a small village. In a young Virgin. In the fragile form of a newborn baby. He does this to teach us to seek Him not in grandeur or power, but in humility, simplicity, and faith.

This weekend, you as a parish have the joy of celebrating a new beginning: the groundbreaking of our new building. Much like Bethlehem, this project begins humbly – perhaps as a vision, a set of plans, a patch of ground waiting for transformation. But with God’s grace, and through your faith, this small beginning will bear fruit, serving as a place of encounter, growth, and community for years to come. Just as the Lord built His Church upon humble foundations, He invites us to be co-workers in His plan – planting seeds today for a harvest that will bless generations.

In today’s Gospel, we hear of another humble beginning: Mary, carrying Jesus in her womb, travels to visit her cousin

Elizabeth. Mary's greeting causes John the Baptist to leap for joy, and Elizabeth proclaims, *"Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."* Mary's faith and willingness to say "yes" made way for the Savior to enter the world. Pope Francis asks: *"What, then, is the secret of a blessed life; what is the secret of a happy life? Recognizing Jesus, but Jesus as the living God, not as a statue."* (end of quote).

This Advent, let us learn from Mary's faith. As we look toward Christmas and this new chapter for your parish, God invites each of you to respond to Him with a faithful "yes" – to believe in His promises and to work together for His Kingdom.

May this new building be a Bethlehem for you – a place where Christ is born anew in your lives. May it be a visible sign of the great things God does when we, like Mary, trust in His Word.

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, let us embrace the paradox of Bethlehem: the small becomes great, the humble is exalted, and the Savior of the world is born in a manger. As Our Lady of Guadalupe taught St. Juan Diego, may she teach us too to trust in God's promises, and to bring his love and light to everyone we encounter.