

**Homily for December 18, 2005  
Fourth Sunday of Advent (B)**

**By Father Charles Bowes**

**2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 126**

**Psalm 89:2-5, 27, 29**

**Romans 16:25-27**

**Luke 1:26-38**

## *All nations are blessed in those who believe.*

People love the Christmas stories because of their beauty and their hopefulness and their excitement.

In fact, we do not know how they were put together or where they come from or how they got into the Gospels. It is certainly not forbidden to think that there might be a good deal more history in them than we are able to prove. But the important point is that they are stories of God's love and of Jesus' role in history, and that's what counts...not historical details. One element is literally true, however. The storyteller puts on Mary's lips the totally accurate prediction (which perhaps the real Mary would not have dared to say) that all nations would call her blessed. They sure have.

Once upon a time, there was a woman who had no love for children. She had been raised in a large family where there were constant fights between the parents, between parents and children, and among the children. She did not want to be any part of a family like that ever again in her life. In her mind, kids were noisy and obnoxious. They were messy, ungrateful, even dishonest. From the moment of conception till you finally got rid of them, when you sent them on their way, they caused nothing but pain. And they fought with you for the rest of your life and broke your heart.

Her friends who had children said that her picture of children was incomplete. They were also wonderful, even if they were often pesky. Her husband

wanted children desperately, but she told him that if he wanted them so much he should find himself another wife. Well, one day she found that she was pregnant. She instantly thought about having an abortion to get rid of the child before anyone found out about it. But she hesitated. "You ought to take a chance with the kid," one of her friends – the only to whom she had told the bad news – advised her. She even went to see a doctor about an abortion, but then she changed her mind at the last minute and decided to take a chance. "Every woman, however she becomes pregnant, takes a chance," her friend said.

Well, you can guess what happened. You'd think she'd invented motherhood! Moreover, she was a very good mother and did not repeat the mistakes of the family in which she was raised. Her children loved her and, more importantly, she loved them.

Mary took a chance too, not utterly different from the one every mother takes. That is the nature of life, of responding to the kingdom, to seize the rich opportunities life offers us – even the opportunity of a new school with all the risk and excitement that entails.

What was Mary's promise is ours too: "You shall conceive and bear a son..." We are all Christ-bearers whose earthly tent in which the Spirit dwells shall last forever.

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