

A REFLECTON ON THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

– by Sister Barbara Jean Franklin, ASC

A marquee in front of a church reads: “The fate of the world rested on the response of a teenage girl.” We know the girl and we know her response, but the profundity of the statement gives us pause. When the angel Gabriel greets Mary he calls her “Full of Grace.” It would be easy to dismiss this greeting as an isolated piece of human history. The event of the Annunciation is in essence a particular event. However, the angel Gabriel could greet each of us in a similar manner. To be human is, in the most profound sense, to live by grace, God’s presence in our hearts and in our midst.

Our Advent journey both collectively and individually has been marked by our efforts to be alert to the many blessings that are present in our everyday lives. It has challenged us to prepare the way of the Lord and thus to reflect God’s presence in our midst. This week we celebrate Christmas. We welcome anew Emmanuel—God with us, among us, between us—bringing healing, justice and peace. The richness of this Christmas Grace is in proportion to our efforts to connect with God and with each other on this journey.

This week we are invited to be grateful to those persons among us whose very lives speak so clearly that they are “full of grace.” We need to be grateful, too, for those who remind us that we are each “full of grace.” Living grace-filled lives is a struggle and many times there may seem to be more evidence to the contrary. At those times it is good to remember that it’s okay to be human—Christ became human, too. Grace enters into the definition of what it means to be human. Grace is God’s power in us healing our spirits, enriching our faith and leading us to loving acts for and with each other.

So, while at a particular moment in human history the future of the world hung on the answer of a girl, today it rests with those who know what it means to be “full of grace.”