

ZE06122229 - 2006-12-22

Permalink: <http://www.zenit.org/article-18521?l=english>

Father Cantalamessa on Fourth Sunday of Advent

"The Lord Is on High but Cares for the Lowly"

DEC. 22, 2006 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Here is a translation of a commentary by the Pontifical Household preacher, Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa, on this Sunday's liturgical readings.

* * *

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Micah 5:2-5; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-48a

He has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness

The last Sunday of Advent is the one that must prepare us immediately for Christmas. By now we should be done with our shopping and be more open to also think about the religious meaning of this festive time.

Today's Gospel is the one that recounts Mary's visit to Elizabeth, which ends with the Magnificat: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness."

With the Magnificat Mary helps us to take in an important aspect of the Christmas mystery on which I would like to insist: Christmas as the feast of the lowly and as the ransoming of the poor.

Mary says: "He has cast down the powerful from their thrones and has lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty."

In today's world there are two new emerging social classes which are no longer the ones we knew in the past. On one hand, there is the cosmopolitan society that knows English, that moves easily in the airports of the world, that knows how to use computers and to "navigate" the internet. For this group the world is already a "global village."

On the other hand, there is the great mass of those who have just left the country of their birth and have limited and only indirect access to the great means of social communication. It is these two groups which today are, respectively, the new "powerful" and the new "lowly."

Mary helps us to put things right again and to not let ourselves be deceived. She tells us that often the deepest values are hidden among the lowly; that the more decisive events in history (such as the birth of Jesus), takes place among the lowly and not on the world's great stages.

Today's first reading tells us that Bethlehem was "a little one among the towns of Judea," and yet in her the Messiah was born. Great writers, like Manzoni and Dostoyevsky, have immortalized, in their works, the values and stories of the "lower class."

ZENIT

The "preferential option" for the poor was something that God decided on well before the Second Vatican Council. Scripture says that "the Lord is on high but cares for the lowly" (Psalm 138:6); he "resists the proud but gives his grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5).

In revelation God continually appears as one who pays attention to the wretched, the afflicted, the abandoned and those who are nothing in the eyes of the world. All of this contains a lesson that is extremely relevant for us today. Our temptation is to do exactly the opposite of what God does: to want to look to those who are on top, not at those who are on the bottom; to those who are prosperous, not to those who are in need.

We cannot be content just remembering that God considers the lowly. We ourselves must become little, humble, at least in our hearts.

The Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem has only one entrance, and you cannot pass through it without bending down. Some have said that it was built this way so that the Bedouins could not enter seated on their camels. But there is another explanation that has always been given, and which, in any case, contains a deep spiritual truth. This door is supposed to remind pilgrims that in order to penetrate the deep meaning of Christmas it is necessary to humble oneself and become little.

In the days that follow we will hear our old Italian carol sung: "Tu scendi dalle stelle, o re del cielo " (You descend from the starry skies, O King of heaven). But if God has descended "from the starry skies," should we not also come down from our pedestals of superiority and power and live together as brothers reconciled?

We too must climb down from the camels to enter into the stable of Bethlehem.

| [More](#)

© Innovative Media, Inc.

Reprinting ZENIT's articles requires written permission from the [editor](#).