

12/24/17 4 Advent B

-- A few of you may remember Fr. Bernie Boff, who often gave mission presentations in our diocese. One of his favorite sayings was *Life is a series of negotiations*. I remember that in particular from our trip to Zimbabwe in 1985. He “negotiated” us out of several sticky situations.

-- It seems like King David thought he could negotiate with God almost as if he was an equal to Him. He planned on doing something for God, now that his kingdom was established and at peace.

-- But God had other things in mind, and God knew David could not help him. This was no negotiation of equal parties. After the prophet Nathan spoke to him, David realized that and gave God the glory which God deserved. And he was OK with God’s plan.

-- This story of my namesake has a very personal message for me at this point in time. There are things about my life and my future I’m tempted to bring to God to negotiate over, as if I was God’s equal. Of course, I’m not.

-- I have my own ideas, but I need to realize that, in the end, God will determine the outcome. And, just as it was in King David’s case, it may be a bit different than this Fr. David may foresee.

-- In the end, God’s plan for King David was much more encompassing than what David could see. He would not build a house for God, but God would build a house for him and his people. God would not abandon them, even in the depths of exile and oppressive rulers.

-- That doesn’t mean that David sat back and did nothing. He started to lay away the materials for his son to build the temple God said he would build. But he trusted that things would work out, even after his death.

-- God’s plan would ultimately be fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who would come into the world by the consent of a teenage virgin mother from people of modest means. Mary was certainly aware that she was not an equal negotiating partner with God.

-- Yes, she asked questions of the angel. But they weren't cynical questions. She trusted that God would take care of her, even though her pregnancy would no doubt be a smudge on the honor of her family.

-- The trust that you and I are called to put in God is not some blind obedience to a dictator (even if a benign dictator). God doesn't take away our intelligence. He expects us to do the hard work of figuring out his will.

-- But he also asks us to give things over to him once we've done that work. So that means I can set my vision before God and the other powers that affect my life. But I have to trust that God knows how that vision will work out in practical terms.

-- And I'm not alone in that task. All of us have to face certain decisions in our lives, some of which may affect the rest of our future. In most cases, there are things about that decision we can control and things we cannot control.

-- In the end, once we've done our work, we must trust that God will lead us in the right direction, even if it's a direction we didn't anticipate. For God will build a house for us, as he did for David and his people.

-- May we try, as best we can, to reflect the trust Mary put in God when she was asked to say Yes to a difficult task. And, when all is said and done, may we have the peace of spirit King David had in order to accept God's adjustment in his own plans.

-- For, in many ways, life may well be a series of negotiations. But when it comes to negotiating with the Almighty One, we'd better know who is in charge.