

***The Royal House.*** (2 Sam 7:1-11,16; Luke 1:26-38)

\* The lighting of the fourth Advent candle belongs to the last Sunday in Advent. By proceeding through this order we announce the completion of something. As for example, that the work of preparing for Advent services is behind; the sanctuary has been decorated for Christmas Eve, all gifts are wrapped, and Christmas cards were mailed. However, we might have missed something. Ah!, now we know. As soon as Jesus' coming in will accomplish the things which only he can do, we are reminded to keep the door open. Otherwise, the work of our preparation is only a shadow of the joy in fulfilled hope. Or what?

\* Trying to formulate the answer, we recall the verse from (Rev 3:20). It may sound assuring, *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me*, said the Lord. Oh my goodness! Really has Jesus arrived? By the way, what are we so excited about? Do we actually need the King to join our gathering? Isn't the humble scene of the birthplace of the Baby Jesus in our sanctuary good enough? Or what?

\* Friends, could you believe? While we are trying to avoid the posing questions, the new meaning of Advent has arrived, even though you may think that it is impossible. *But ... , say the friends!* You are right, we reply. There is nothing new under the sun; yet, old things may be forgotten, can't they? As for example, the things you heard on the second Sunday in Advent. At that time we remarked on a new logo of our Synod, and particularly, on the three imperative words of the logo, *Witness – Mercy - Life Together*. These words say nothing except that *Witness* and *Mercy* ought to be done for the sake of *Life Together*. This order comes out from the teaching of the Word, and we ought to practice it, where it is possible. The new-old meaning of Christ's Advents is *Life Together* - the utmost goal of his coming! However, if I mistake, it is with the Bible in my hand.

\* With Christ's first coming, God possessed the human nature in order to make us members of his royal house forever. This truth is sounded in Jesus' High Priestly Prayer. *Father*, he said, *I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world*, (Joh 17:24). That is the primary meaning of Christ' Advent - the Son of God comes into the world in order to make us one family with the Holy Trinity. According to the apostle's insight, with Christ's second Advent, we'll be changed and taken together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thes 4:17). With Christ's coming, the Church, pure and beautiful, will appear as a bride prepared for the bridegroom. That is the remarkable event of the Second Advent and its goal. This is what we meant when we said that the new meaning of Advent has arrived.

\* As far as we understand that Christ's Advent is about to bring all members of God's household together, it becomes clear why our personal and synodical core of values need to be stressed on Life Together. All other priorities should subordinate to this utmost purpose of our existence.

There is nothing better and pleasant in God's eyes than when brothers live together in unity of mind and heart. <sup>2</sup> *It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes!* <sup>3</sup> *It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life forevermore, (Ps 133).*

\* Jesus started to build his house on the principle of love, (Mat 20:25-28); his death on the cross was a place where the finest love of God accomplished our salvation. Being faithful to Jesus, the apostles insisted on brotherly love among believers. The example of this is found in the book of Acts. *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers, (2:42).* The fellowship among members of the church was described in the following verses 44-46; first, as a state of being together, and secondly, as devoted themselves unto each other for Christ's sake. It says that the members of the church were together and had all things in common; those who might have need were helped at the expenses of the well-off. Those Christians got together on a regular basis, in the temple for prayer and worship, and in their houses for breaking bread, (Act 2:44-46).

\* In addition to this meaning, the NT writers used the word *Fellowship*, *fist*, as the pledge of communion in fulfilling the apostolic office, (Gal 2:9); and secondly, in the sharing of both, the blessings and suffering, (Phi 3:10). In summary, the word Fellowship (in Greek - *koinōnía*) includes more than just to live together; it is life together on the principle of love and the brotherly sharing of common things. Now, you know all the important things regarding the synodical logo - *Witness – Mercy - Life Together* and may even be ready to discuss it with our college professors.

\* Following the explanatory lesson, we call your attention to the OT reading of the day, (2 Sam 7:1-11,16). It reveals a great contrast between what man's thoughts and what God has in mind. According to the book of Samuel, God established peace in the land after the countless wars King David had engaged in. Once the King came across with thought, *See*, he said to Nathan the prophet, *I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent, (v. 2).* At that moment, David perceived himself as a guilty king who has neglected God's primacy. The prophet agreed with David's idea to build a house for God. *The Lord is with you,* responded Nathan. However, as it became known later, the Lord revealed himself as the builder of the house that human engineering is not able to build. In this connection, we found an illustration. Here it is.

\* A cute little girl was sitting on top of a pile of luggage in a hotel lobby. Her parents were at the desk registering for their room. A sympathetic lady asked the little girl if they were visiting relatives in the city. *"Oh, no,"* the girl replied. *"We're going to live at this hotel until we find a house. My Daddy has a new job and we had to sell our house and move."* The lady said, *"Oh, it's too bad you don't have a home."* To which the girl replied, *"Oh we have a home--it's just that we don't have a house to put it in."* In view of God's omnipotence, this illustration leads us to the same conclusion with the girl - the entire world is not great enough for

God's dwelling place. And second, is that David's conception of God's house associated with a temple furnished by gold and precious stones, while God spoke of himself as a Builder of a home rather than a house; namely the royal family, the priestly community under tender shepherding of His beloved Son.

\* At certain time God's promise was fulfilled in the coming of Jesus, a direct descendant of David.

Our gospel lesson from (Luk 1:26 -38) is the starting point of the story. It came to pass when the Angel Gabriel entering where Mary was, saluted her saying: *"Hail Mary full of grace. Thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a son."* At the end of the conversation with the Angel Mary said, *"Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to thy word!"*

\* Mary was chosen to be Mother of our Lord, through her God began to build His royal family - the Church of Christ. In Matthew we read, *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet,* (Mat 1:22). Jesus Christ came into the world under Caesar Augustus, before the death of king Herod the Great, and four years before the traditional date of our common era. Jesus was born at Bethlehem of Judaea, in the royal line of David, from Mary - *"the wedded Maid and Virgin Mother."*

\* Throughout the centuries after Christ's ascension, millions of people from all tribes and nations became members of the royal family by virtue of their faith in Christ Jesus, so are we. The Father answered the Son's desire to bring his followers to the place where he is bodily now, (John 17:24). But while we are among the living on earth, Jesus' prayer for the unity among his people should also be our concern because unity does not just happen; we have to work at it. Offenses, gossip, and favoritism among members of churches lead to divisions, and if they have taken place, they have to be removed. Otherwise, the Lord will judge.

\* Paul admonishes the church in Corinth to correct their unchristian behavior and to build their relations with each other according to Christ's will over them. As members of the royal House, we are called to live in the bond of loving union among the brethren; for we are *one* body in *one* Spirit; we are given *one* faith in *one* baptism; we have *one* purpose in *one* Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, we have *one* God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit! Brothers, keep the door open, for the King is coming.

And the faithful responds, Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.

Amen