

**December 19**

**Door Is Open**

19 December 2018

Dear Father Garry, dear Sisters, staff, volunteers and patrons of the Door Is Open and dear friends in Christ:

***Introduction***

This morning we are celebrating this Holy Mass together before the Annual Christmas Party which is the occasion to thank all of those who lend their hand to the beautiful ministry of the Door Is Open, a remarkable place of caring where the face of Jesus is revealed and revered in its patrons.

The mission of the Door Is Open is to lessen the plight of the poor, the homeless, and the single room tenants of the DTES by making available resources that ensure their dignity.

You know the nutritious meals that are served to tens of thousands every year. But the Door Is Open also runs a women's wellness program, provides clothing and a food bank and hosts other services such as a meeting place for AA, a women's group, the Elizabeth Fry Society. It also allows youth groups and students from our schools to learn about homelessness and poverty and to make their own contribution to a better world. We will do this through the following projects:

We will provide our guests with shelter during the day by running a

drop-in center where they can relax and socialize or have a light meal. We will provide our guests with safe respite during the day from the dangers of the street.

What makes the Door Is Open unique is that its activities are inspired by the caring ministry of Jesus Christ but never engages in forced religious programs. .

Dear volunteers and staff: you are intimately involved in the Church's commitment to social justice, and I thank you for the energy, good will, dedication and prayer that you put into your activities. You are a blessing to all of us, and my gratitude for you, as well as that of the whole Archdiocese of Vancouver, is boundless. Reaching out to the marginalized is an activity in which the Church shows her heart of love. You are instruments of that love, sowing hope among the patrons who are in need of grasping a compassionate and non-judgmental hand.

### *Gospel*

In today's Gospel, we have the account of an "annunciation," but not the one familiar to you of the Angel Gabriel appearing to Mary. Here the annunciation is to a man, Zacharias.

Luke begins his telling of Christ's birth by presenting an elderly barren couple, Elizabeth and Zechariah, who longed for a child. But with Elizabeth advanced in years, their situation seemed humanly hopeless.

But then God intervenes, and the Angel Gabriel appears to

Zechariah in the temple and announces that their prayer has been heard: his wife will bear a son whom he is to name John.

The old priest, however, takes this to be impossible. Not only is he promised a son, but one who is to “be great in the sight of the Lord” (Lk 1:15), and in whom many will rejoice at his birth. Because he does not accept the Angel’s word, he is struck dumb.

What’s St. Luke trying to tell us?

First of all, he’s reminding us that as a people, and as individuals, we need saving. And second, Luke tells us that God provides an answer to this need; he intervenes in our world and in our lives.

### ***We Need a Saviour***

For the people of Israel, the inability to give life was considered almost a curse, because not having children prevented fulfillment of the Lord’s commandment to fill the earth with new lives.

This barrenness symbolizes a humanity that is exhausted and barren. It waits, time passes, and it cannot produce anything good. There seems to be no way out of this hopeless situation. It needs a Saviour, someone to intervene and change what seems to be the natural course to disappointment and despair..

But today: do we still really believe we need a “Saviour”? Is a “Saviour” still needed by a humanity which has reached the moon and is ready to conquer the universe? By a humanity which has succeeded in

deciphering the marvellous codes of the human genome? Is a Saviour needed by a humanity which navigates the Internet and has made the Earth, our common home, a global village?

But there is another side to our triumphs. Even here in our City homelessness abounds and human trafficking robs countless women and children of their dignity. Others are victims of racial discrimination and religious intolerance, and by political interference and moral coercion with regard to the free exercise of their religion profession of their faith. And what of those who are trapped in loneliness and who often end up enslaved to alcohol or drugs? And those who choose death in the belief that they are celebrating life?

I am convinced that we still need to be “saved” from all that holds back from living as God wants.

People are seeking, sometimes unconsciously, the coming of a Saviour who will reverse the suffering and evil in the world. Even if they don't know it and can't name him, they are waiting for a Saviour, Jesus Christ.

### ***God Gives Us a Saviour***

But is this waiting in vain?

From today's Readings it is clear that the capacity to bestow life and salvation comes only from the Lord. From the barrenness of Elizabeth life comes forth only because of God's intervention.

One thing is certain: “we cannot save ourselves by ourselves.”  
Only God’s intervention brings us salvation.<sup>1</sup>

Zechariah was struck dumb because he didn’t really believe that God could enter into his life and make him a father. He didn’t believe that there was any salvation – or “way out” – of his situation.

But, despite Zechariah’s lack of faith, God still acted. There really can be new beginnings and the unexpected can really happen to us. With God nothing is impossible – even *I* can change.

Do we really trust that God can do the unlikely – and even the seemingly impossible – with our lives? That he is truly *my* Saviour?

Christmas proves the point. In his merciful goodness, God has send us his Son as Saviour; he has become flesh and dwelt among us (cf. Jn 1:14). The angelic choirs in the Bethlehem night rightly proclaimed: “I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Christ, the Lord” (Lk 2:10-11).

### ***Conclusion***

And this Saviour born long ago in Bethlehem continues to dwell with us, saving us from ourselves, and is with us especially now as we celebrate his presence in this Eucharist.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Francis, Morning Meditation (19 December 2013).

✦ J. Michael Miller, CSB  
Archbishop of Vancouver