

**The fourth Sunday of Advent 2018 - C
Homily by Rev. Bob Schramm, O.S.F.S.**

**For the past month we've heard about our celebrations
of Advent and Christmas being about schooling us.
Advent and Christmas are about schooling us in waiting and patience,
about being joyfully expectant about life.
Joy is very different than gleeful with a painted-on smile.
Over and over, we've heard in the Scriptures this past month
those words "Thus says the Lord."
Those four words, "Thus says the Lord" really mean
you can count on God's promises.
We have reason for joy.
Joy often looks like calm rather than like wearing a painted-on smile.
God promises us joy . . . hope.
WE are not simply being schooled.**

**So, we are being schooled.
We also have a sacred mission to do schooling,
The mission, the ministry of every single baptized person, i.e., us,
is teaching/schooling ALL those with whom we come in contact.
Francis of Assisi said: "Preach the Gospel at every moment.
Use words when necessary."
Our sins, I think, are most often those of omission:
It's our failures to reflect joy, hope, patience,
a willingness to wait that are perhaps our greatest sins/failures.**

**In today's first reading, we heard about Bethlehem-Ephrathah.
Who . . . what . . . where is that?
It's a no-count place that suddenly has the odor of holiness about it.
The reading speaks about a shepherd who shall be peace.**

**Pope Francis talks about shepherds who smell like their sheep.
Isaiah speaks about smelly shepherds
who suddenly have the fragrance of majesty about them.
And Moses insists "Would that all the people . . ."
had the order, the scent of prophets."**

**Lincoln: "Government of, by, for people."
We govern!**

**Government shutdown
Unilaterally pulling troops out of Afghanistan and Syria.
Insistence on building an outrageously expensive wall
without a hint of an assurance that it can achieve its purpose.
All promoted by a relatively tiny group, wealthy demagogues, fanatics,**

forming the president's so-called "base."
Hardly reflective of growing national and international consensus and
causing instability in the whole world.
We all need to have respect for the office of president.
But it can be sinful not to cry out
about many things the president and many other national leaders
are doing and not doing.
Troubling resignations of high-placed officials
are like warning shots across the bow of the ship of State.
Too many are giving our president a pass,
excusing his breaches in honesty and integrity.
Wait a minute, you're talking politics.
You bet I am.
What I'm not doing is talking in a partisan way. Big difference!

The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews says, "we have been consecrated."
We speak of the consecration of the Mass.
Not so much what is consecrated but who is consecrated.

At the consecration we are all set aside
for a huge mission, ministry.
We are set apart for some special work,
set apart for some position of responsibility.
Coming to Mass, the writer of Hebrews insists,
can't be an empty, hollow ritual.
We are the ones being consecrated

In the Gospel of Luke, Gabriel says to Mary:
"Greetings! You are filled with grace."
That's really an assurance for ALL of us.
Our very nature is to be holy, which is what "full of grace" means after all.

The gospel story says that right after saying "yes" to Gabriel, to God,
Mary sets off on a journey.
With Mary, we're all on the way somewhere.
Not to some place.
The journey is itself our destiny.
We are destined to be travelers.
We're not looking to get there.
We're already there.

In this season, we are being schooled in patience, waiting, joyfully
expecting, in hope.