

A few weeks ago, I was at my parents home for my day off. My folks have long-ago given away all their old Christmas trees and ornaments away to kids, grandkids, or someone. The only Christmas decorations left were mine - the tree and ornaments that I owned ten years ago - and hadn't put up since. We went out in the barn and brought in the box and the instructions.

You know, the kind - each layer of the tree is labelled with a color and a letter. The branches had been sorted into about 8 piles ... from "F" to "M" ... but what about "A" through "E" and "N" through "S"? That was what was listed on the front page of the instructions - branches "A" through "S"

So, mom and I went back out to the barn and rummaged through more boxes. We found all sorts of things - old college books and notes, stuff from my time in military service ... but we didn't find any missing branches for the Christmas tree. Next we went through more boxes in the house ... still, nothing. It was looking like getting a Christmas tree put up this year was going to be pretty much impossible. Just as I was about to put the branches back in the box, and leave the box - this time - on the curb for the garbage pick-up; I took one more look at the instructions ... I read beyond the first page and then the second page and the third page..

And there at the bottom of the third page, in fine print, it said ...

"Not all branches are used for all models. Please see back page for a list of branches for your particular model." Lo and behold - on the very last page, it said: "Tree Model Number - 50567 uses branches labelled 'F' through 'M'"

In other words - we already had the branches we needed all along.

It only took a few minutes after that to get the tree up ... unlike the hours spent trying to find the 'missing' branches - that branches that really weren't missing in the first place.

It's always best to read all of the instructions if you want to know the plan.

In the first reading we hear about King David who was the most unlikely of kings ... a shepherd boy who eventually becomes a mighty warrior ... and then forgets his past ... and becomes an adulterer and then a murderer.

King David has a big plan to leave a legacy in the form of a great temple for God. But God tells him ... not now ... not yet ... not you ... but your son.

And then God reminds King David how he got to where he is ... that it was God who took him from the pasture ... it was God who was with him ... God who destroyed his enemies ... God who made him powerful ... and famous ...

Yet God doesn't stop there - next He unfolds a future plan for a new kingdom ...

It will be God who will give this kingdom stability ... God who will hold off their enemies ... God who will raise up a king from King David's family line ... God who will make that kingdom firm ... God who will be Father to that king ... God who will make that kingdom stand forever.

This is "*the revelation of the mystery*" that St. Paul speaks of in the second reading ... which was "*kept secret for long ages but [is] now manifested through the prophetic writings and, according to the command of the eternal God*" God's plan.

And in the fullness of time, God sends His messenger to a young woman named Mary living in the town of Nazareth in Galilee with this message ...

*you will conceive ... and bear a son,
... you shall name him Jesus.*

He will be great ...

*[He] will be called Son of the Most High,
... God will give him the throne of David his father,
... [He] will rule over the house of Jacob forever,
... [His] kingdom ... will [have] no end.*

*The Holy Spirit will come upon [her],
... the power of the Most High will overshadow [her].*

... for nothing will be impossible for God.

Again, God's plan. Not necessarily what she might have been thinking about doing that particular day. What is amazing is her openness to God's plan - without hesitation she says:

Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.

May it be done to me according to your word.

We often struggle to embrace God's plan. We have our own ideas, and our own ways of doing things. God's plan doesn't often make sense to us. Sometimes we have to do things that aren't easy. Sometimes we have to wait to do things we want to do.

Let us pray for an openness to God's plan - knowing that His plan may not always match our plan. But knowing that God's plan is always the best plan.

... for nothing will be impossible for God.