

*At the beginning of the last century, a renowned university professor went to a Japanese master to inquire about studying under him. As they sat, the master served tea. He poured tea into the professor's cup until it was full – and then kept on pouring. The professor watched this until he couldn't stand it anymore, finally saying "It's too full! It can't hold anymore!" The master replied, "Like this cup, you too are full of your own thoughts and ideas. How can I show you anything unless you first empty your cup?"*

Today is the Fourth Sunday of Advent. The Advent wreath is now fully lit. And we are only a few days away from Christmas.

In today's Gospel, we hear the familiar story of the Annunciation. Mary is approached by the Angel Gabriel who tells her what is in store for her according to God's plan.

We have been dealing with Christmas since before Halloween. Every year, it seems, the retailers move the date for putting out Christmas things earlier and earlier. Black Friday and Cyber Monday have become week-long, or month-long sales that never seem to end. Store hours creep later and later until they're nearly open all-day anyway.

Yet here we are in Advent still – waiting with joyful expectation?

Or are we overwhelmed? Overworked? Saturated? Exhausted?

Has the outside culture filled us so full of Christmas that it's running out of our ears and so that we're already full before we've even reached the day itself?

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, let us pray for the grace to be open to His coming to us.

And as we continue these last few days of Advent leading up to Christmas Day, let us find the time to empty our hearts, and minds, and souls of all the hustle and bustle ... the excess. So that when Christmas comes ... when Christ does arrive ... we may be able to truly receive Him into our hearts ... and into our homes.