

- It is the supreme irony of our faith that the incomparable gift of eternal *life* is given to us through the *death* of our Lord on the Cross.
- By all appearances the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords was defeated upon Calvary on that first Good Friday so long ago.
- We can only imagine the immense grief suffered by our Lady, St. John, and Mary Magdalene as they made their way home that particular Friday evening after enduring the terrible and gruesome spectacle of Calvary.
- But as we know so well, that grief was turned to joy on Easter Sunday as our Lord rose from the dead. And now we celebrate this irony that it was our Lord's death that gives us life.
- Every crucifix that we see is a testament to this great paradox of our faith that, it was by His apparent defeat on Calvary that our Lord triumphed over sin and death.
- The God that we serve is a God of miracles! He is awesome in His power, and throughout salvation history He has often acted in ways that the human mind could never fathom in order to bring about His holy will for the salvation of His people.
- We see this in our Lord's choice of seemingly unlikely people to accomplish important and heroic tasks, as well as in the miraculous events surrounding the lives of those whom He chooses for important roles in salvation history.
- For example, our Gospel speaks to us today about St. John the Baptist, the greatest of Israel's prophets. Remember, John the Baptist's conception and birth were miraculous. His parents were advanced in age, and his mother, Elizabeth, was thought to be barren.
- And yet our Lord had a plan for the tireless herald of His Son! And in a miracle that both foreshadowed the Savior's conception and birth as well as showed forth God's almighty power, St. John the Baptist was brought into this world.
- Despite the peculiarities of his appearance, St. John was courageous, wise, and completely devoted to his task of announcing the coming of the Messiah! This is what made him so great!
- Like so many of our saints, St. John was willing to die rather than go against God's will. And he did. He died a very unjust death.
- Amazingly, our Lord often uses sinners to accomplish His will as well. Think of King David, whose name we often hear tossed about in Scripture this time of year as the messianic prophecies speak repeatedly of our Lord as being of the "House of David."
- But remember, David was a murderer and an adulterer. David had Uriah the Hittite killed in battle so that he could take Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, as his own.
- Yet because David repented, God forgave him and made a promise to raise up an heir for him whose kingdom will last forever. And we know this heir to be not his son, Solomon, but actually Jesus, Who was born of the House of David.
- Thus, King David is a wonderful testament to God's mercy and forgiveness. In God's eyes, no one is beyond redemption if we are sorry for our sins. But even more so, no one – no matter how sinful or insignificant – is beyond God's power to use for some greater good.
- Isn't that why so many of us love the saints like St. Augustine, St. Paul, and St. Mary Magdalene? These saints have a past. They were sinners, and yet by God's grace they were brought to conversion and became pillars of our faith.

- And as we look upon them with this knowledge of their sinfulness and conversion, we're given a glimmer of hope that maybe, just maybe, God can do the same with us!
- These saints remind us that not only are we not beyond redemption, but that God can actually use us – sinful as we are – to do great things in this world so that other might be saved too!
- Of course not all of our great heroes and heroines of our faith were sinners. The greatest of our saints was the one who was completely sinless throughout the entirety of her life: the Blessed Virgin Mary!
- Yet even though she was sinless, Mary's unique place in salvation history is no less paradoxical!
- Think of the marvelous story of the Annunciation, which we hear repeatedly at this time of year. In this story we see that our Lord put the salvation of the entire human race into the hands of a 14-year old girl!
- Of course, looking back now from the vantage point of 2000 years of Christian history, we know that this was no ordinary girl.
- By faith we know that Mary was specially prepared from all eternity for that supreme moment in her life when the Archangel Gabriel appeared to her, revealing to her the Almighty's plan for humanity's salvation.
- But even though she was sinless and a paragon of integrity, the fact remains that Mary was still awfully young for the task given to her by God!
- No doubt our Lord uses such ironies and paradoxes to highlight His omnipotence in more dramatic and convincing fashion, and thereby instill greater belief in His omnipotence in our unbelieving world.
- The point, though, is that the Archangel Gabriel was absolutely right: *nothing* is impossible for God. Nothing! God's power is absolute. He can do all things!
- And thus we must take the same position of absolute faith in God as Mary did when Gabriel approached, and say with her: "Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum!" "May it be done to me according to your word."
- And as we consider our Lord's omnipotence – His power to do anything that He wills – I think it good for us to ask: What seemingly impossible thing do I want from God?
- My dear brothers and sisters, in just a week's time we will celebrate that our infinite and all-powerful Lord condescended to become a very tiny and powerless baby. We will celebrate that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us for our salvation.
- May we do so with a tireless and powerful faith, believing with absolute certainty that this tiny child is the all-powerful One who can do all things – even that which seems impossible.
- Indeed, may we trust that He comes not only to save us from our sins, but that He can work miracles among us and through us. And may we have the courage to ask of Him in prayer that for which our hearts long, but that our minds refuse to acknowledge as possible.
- May all things be done unto us according to His will!