

Our Lady of Lourdes

Fourth Sunday in Advent

December 20, 2009

Readings:

Micah 5:1-4a

Hebrews 10:5-10

Luke 1:39-45

Deacon Bob

So how is Advent been? How are all the Christmas preparations going? Let me ask a question, what makes Christians different than other shoppers during the month of December? As believers in Christ we shop, we plan parties we do all the things that others do this time of the year. How are we different? Quite simply we anticipate something in this season, we believe someone is coming.

Many prophets predicted the arrival of God in our midst. In our first reading from the prophet Micah we hear that the one who is to come will not only bring peace but be peace. Micah prophesies that the ruler of Israel, the Savior of the world will come from Bethlehem, too small to be among the clan of Judah. God comes into the world as a helpless baby in a small place not well known. Are there places in your life, in my life that we dismiss as insignificant so that we fail to see the presence of God?

A young couple would sit on the patio at the rear of their house sensing their blessings. They were blessed to be present at a slow motion miracle, the nine month waiting for the birth of their first child. Each night after dinner they would sit together and look at the stars. They would sense the endless possibilities in store for them and this new human being they were preparing to welcome into the world.

Even as the nights got colder they still sat gazing up at the stars. They thought about the story of Joseph and Mary and the star that led their way. They were able to better appreciate the perils of a pregnant women traveling a great distance from her home and for Joseph and his worries doing all that he could do keep Mary safe and comfortable . Mary and Joseph's story became their own, a story of anticipation and hope.

This young couple was going to wait to have a child. They wanted a bigger house and more money in the bank. The pregnancy had been a surprise, a shock at first. All that changed with the first sonogram and when they felt the baby's first kick. They could not have expected that everything they were chasing would be found where they least expected it as they prepared to care for another human, their first child.

In the Advent season we prepare to again welcome the child Jesus born in an unknown place in a manger but we need to remember that Christ is present to us not only this time of the year but all throughout our lives. He is present to us in Sacred Scripture, in the readings we heard proclaimed today. We need to make scripture a part of our daily life so that we can relish Christ presence. Jesus is present to us in the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist.

When we receive Jesus' body and blood in Holy Communion we are entrusted with his presence. We are to be his presence to those we meet. Jesus is also present in the community as we gather. This is the reason that each person should be treated with dignity and respect. This is the reason we are to care for one another.

Yes the readings this week are full of paradoxes about where to look for great things. The Christ child is born in Bethlehem. Mary, a woman of humble estate becomes the means of God becoming man.

Mary was greeted by an angel and told that she would give birth to a child. His name would be Jesus, Emmanuel God with us. Mary was confused but the angel told her all things are possible with God. He told her that Elizabeth her relative who could not have children was six months pregnant.

Mary believed and was filled with the Holy Spirit. Mary gives us wonderful example she has faith and she responds. She travels to Elizabeth to see her and to assist her. Mary reminds us that each of us are called not to stand still but to move forward in our faith. Reception, the gift of faith requires us to be grateful and to respond.

Mary the 'Christ Bearer' brings the presence of the messiah to Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting the baby in her womb jumped for joy. Elizabeth calls Mary blessed because she has believed. Both women of faith would never be the same again. Our faith too should change us each day. Each time we come here to receive Christ in word, sacrament and in each other we should never be the same.

Elizabeth was old and Mary young. The norm would be for Mary to praise Elizabeth but the opposite takes place. Elizabeth is the one praising Mary. During these final days of Advent and Christmas perhaps it is a good time to encourage younger people, for parents, Grandparents, teachers and leaders to encourage those around them by reminding them that they are important, valuable to God and to them.

Mary and Elizabeth experienced the very first Advent as they anticipate the birth of Christ and ministered to each other. We like Elizabeth and Mary are to recognize the hand of God in our lives. Their responses altered history. Our response to God may not alter history but it can alter our lives and the lives of those around us.

In the reading from Hebrews Christ says he comes to do the will of his Father. Mary responded to God by saying not my will but yours be done. As we conclude this Advent season I invite you to find a balance between the energy spent on all the things of Christmas and the energy we spend on spiritual growth. Find a balance and say Yes to the invitation that God is with us. That Jesus will be in our hearts and guide us in the final days of Advent.