



Christ in Our Neighborhood



CYCLE A

Prayer

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts, that we to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son who was made known by the message of an angel, may by his Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of his Resurrection. Who lives and reigns one God forever and ever.

Commentary

1st Reading: Isaiah 7:10-14

In this reading, God sends Isaiah to meet King Ahaz who is taking steps to secure his kingdom from attack. The king is invited by Isaiah to choose a sign from God that would help his doubts. The purpose of the offer is to help the king to shore up his faith. The king declines the invitation. So, Isaiah declares God will choose His own sign.

The sign is far better than the king could ask for: "A virgin will conceive and bear a son. She will name the child Emmanuel 'God is with us.'" So through the words of the prophet, God makes a promise and commitment to the Hebrew people. God will deliver his people.

This reading should encourage us who, like King Ahaz, spend many of our days defending our own personal kingdoms from attack. Rather than asking God for some sign, or trying to fix things on our own, we should trust in the Lord who will come through for us in the end.

The Lord truly is Emmanuel - God with us!

Question

In moments of doubt have you ever experienced the "God is with you" gift from God?

Commentary

2nd Reading: Romans 1:1-7

Paul's message to the Romans has to do with who he was, who Christ Jesus was, and who Christians were called to be.

The one opening sentence composed of at least 14 clauses was excessive even in Paul's time and culture. However, Paul wanted the listeners to ponder God's serious commitment to his people.

The centerpiece of Paul's opening statement is what can be called "the Gospel of God." That is the good news about God's son, descended from David and revealed as Son of God through the power of the Holy Spirit in his resurrection. Thus are those few words explained in detail

that Jesus is the long awaited Savior.

This Gospel of God gives the Roman community their identity. They must adopt the Gospel as their own and be prepared to proclaim it everywhere.

Question

How can this Gospel of God theme help me this week in preparation for the celebration of Christmas?

We thank Msgr. Neal Dolan,
a retired priest in the Diocese of San Diego,
for providing these commentaries
for the Season of Advent.

Bring someone back to the Church by inviting him
or her to break open the Word of God through
Christ in Our Neighborhood.

4th Sunday of Advent

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Download free PDFs for your parish groups or family gatherings.

Commentary

Gospel: Matthew 1:18-24

Joseph holds an extraordinary place in tradition; although little is said of him in Scripture. Outside of Matthew and Luke's infancy narratives, Joseph is mentioned only in the Gospel of John where nothing is said of him except that he was the father of Jesus.

Matthew, in today's reading, gives emphasis to Joseph being the patriarch of the family. Joseph is the bridge figure from one covenant to another.

The dilemma for Joseph was discovering Mary's pregnancy and whether to divorce her or have her stoned as the law allowed. On the other hand, the Jewish scriptural tradition acclaimed God who is known for having mercy. The demands of law for justice seemingly contradicted the divine practice of mercy.

Joseph's own preference led the way to a dream where an angel appeared to convince him that he could bypass the law and make the child of God his own.

The time of Emmanuel had come - God would be with his people. Joseph received God's grace and became the bridge between God and humankind and took Jesus into his heart.

Question

How can I be awakened from my sleep and take Jesus into my heart and home this Christmas?

This Week's Task

Make a valiant attempt to bring one person to Christmas who has not been a part of church for a while. Try to help them wake up from their sleep and receive Jesus into their home.

Consider inviting someone to your Christ in Our Neighborhood grouping. If you don't have a group, start one. Need help? Visit christ-ion.com.

Group Prayer

The group sings/prays the following by Roland Palmer (1938):

Sing of Mary, pure and lowly,
Virgin mother undefiled,
Sing of God's own Son most holy,
Who became her little child.
Fairest child of fairest mother,
God the Lord who came to earth,
Word made flesh, our very brother,
Takes our nature by his birth.

Sing of Jesus, son of Mary,
In the home at Nazareth.
Toil and labour cannot weary
Love enduring unto death.
Constant was the love he gave her,
Though he went forth from her side,
Forth to preach, and heal, and suffer,
Till on Calvary he died.

Continue with Psalm 24

Psalm

Response: Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory.

The LORD's are the earth and its fullness;
the world and those who dwell in it.
For he founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the rivers.

R. Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory.

Who can ascend the mountain of the LORD?
or who may stand in his holy place?
One whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean,
who desires not what is vain.

R. Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory.

He shall receive a blessing from the LORD,
a reward from God his savior.
Such is the race that seeks for him,
that seeks the face of the God of Jacob.

R. Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory.

Conclude with an Our Father