

The Fourth Sunday of Advent/Year A –  
17/18 December 2016 –  
Our Lady of Victory Parish Community –  
HOMILY

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading:**

Isaiah 7:10-14

- “The Lord spoke to Ahaz, . . . Ask for a sign from the Lord, your God; . . . But Ahaz answered, “I will not ask! I will not tempt the Lord!” . . . Then Isaiah said: “Listen, O house of David! Is it not enough for you to weary people, must you also weary my God? Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel.”

**Responsorial Psalm:**

Psalm 24 - *Sung*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading:**

Romans 1:1-7

- “Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God, . . . the gospel about his Son, descended from David according to the flesh, but established as Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness through resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him . . . to bring about the obedience of faith, for the sake of his name, among all Gentiles, . . .

**GOSPEL:**

**MATTHEW 1:18-24**

- “This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. . . . betrothed to Joseph, . . . the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. . . . She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means, “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his house.”

I. “The Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying: Ask for a sign from the Lord, your God; . . . But Ahaz answered, “I will not ask! I will not tempt the Lord!” . . .

Sounds pretty admirable . . . until one digs a bit deeper . . . you see, King Ahaz was somewhat on the other side of the political situation . . .

Ancient Syria had entered into an alliance with the northern kingdom of Israel against the southern kingdom of Judah, of which Ahaz was King, and, they had laid siege to Jerusalem, located in the southern kingdom . . . Ahaz favored Assyria . . . fellow Semites, unlike the Syrians, who were not . . . so the allies of the two kingdoms were actually enemies of one another . . . While Ahaz’s refusal to ask the Lord for a sign, again, seems admirable . . . most likely it was because he had already decided that his “sign”, if you will, was going to be the support of the Assyrians . . . he was after a “political” victory, if you will . . .

II. So . . . perhaps any one of us would like a “**sign**” . . . forgetting for a moment what our various motives might be . . . wanting a “**sign**” . . . some “**hint**” from beyond that the child we carry is going to be happy and healthy . . . that the illness that is plaguing either us, or someone we care for deeply or know well, is going to be dealt with successfully . . . that the one we

believe we are in love with is the right person for the rest of our lives . . . that Christmas will be all we hope for . . . and the list goes on . . .

Yes . . . perhaps it's more than "any one of us" . . . perhaps it is **all** of us . . . we want signs . . . because we don't like surprises . . . because we want to move on to the next "thing" in our lives and not have to deal with the unknown . . . because we just are not good at waiting . . .

**III.** But . . . can we, like Joseph, heed what the angel said: "Do not be afraid" . . . albeit . . . we are not necessarily facing what Joseph was facing . . . but . . . as I've already shared . . . we are concerned about other things that touch us deeply and personally . . . can we **more** than heed what the angel said to Joseph . . . and sincerely embrace it . . . **"Do not be afraid"** . . . and more than that . . . can we trust what the angel went on to say . . . as astounding as it was to Joseph . . . as astounding as it might be to us: "the virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him **Emmanuel** . . . **"God is with us."**"

Oh, yes . . . there will be all of the pomp and ceremony and joyful music and song and wonderful prayers and readings and lights and smells and gifts and decorations and all of the festivity that goes with

our commemorating that first coming . . . that actual mysterious entry into humanity by God . . . joining heaven and earth together . . . as there should be . . . There will be all of this and more, not because God needs it . . . but because **we**, and all of humanity, should be **overjoyed** that God acted as God did . . . but . . . **“God is with us”** already . . . now . . . this moment . . . here . . . **God** is with you . . . **God** is with me . . . He doesn’t drop in once a year and then head back to heaven like Santa does to the North Pole . . . He plants himself right here . . . right smack dab in the middle of our childbirths . . . of our struggles with health . . . of our juggling of finances . . . of our loves gained and our loves lost . . . of our joys and also of our sorrows . . . God does that . . .

God is here for the faithful as well as the unfaithful . . . for the found as well as the lost . . . for the 99 as well as, and **especially**, for the one . . . **God is with us** . . .

And perhaps . . . just perhaps . . . instead of our need of a **sign** . . . perhaps it is our turn . . . our turn to not only give God a sign . . . but others, as well . . . to allow this conviction to **overflow** in abundance from our very center . . . to let others know that **Emmanuel** is at the center of my life . . . your life . . . our life . . . and wants to be at the center of every

person's life . . . perhaps, it is our turn . . . yours and mine . . . to not just show this joy to our family members . . . our closest friends . . . but to the person who sits next to us . . . either now . . . or next weekend, when more will come to celebrate the birth of the Savior . . . of our Savior and theirs . . . yes . . . perhaps it will be our turn to show others a sign of **"God is with us"** . . . and how absolutely necessary and life changing that has been and continues to be . . .