

Homily 4th Sunday Advent Year A 2022

Let us avoid being caught up in the legal and religious challenges Mary and Joseph faced concerning the conception of Jesus and focus on what we can learn from this marvellous story of Jesus that began facing grave difficulties. We cannot but be deeply grateful not only that God wanted to save us from the harm we were doing to ourselves but that God loved us so much that he chose to send his beloved Son to save us.

There is more. Not only did God send his Son but he wanted us to be an integral part of the salvation he was offering by seeking the acceptance of both Mary and Joseph. In wanting our cooperation, God wished to work with us for our salvation and with our full acceptance. This has become the blueprint of every human relationship with God: a cooperation with God in all the good that we do, especially for those in need, physically, spiritually, and humanly... To reinforce this relationship God chose to name his Son **Emmanuel**.

There is something profound and inscrutable about the name God chose for his Son: **Emmanuel – God with us**. This is a name that belongs to us all, for God is truly with us and Christmas is a special reminder of this. We, too, are God bearers. Christmas sheds a light on the mystery of God within us, within others and within creation. The story reminds us that this is far from an easy task. It is a mystery filled challenge that involves hardship and suffering, all of which can strengthen the presence of *Emmanuel* who dwells within.

Annie O'Connor of the Church Army writes:

“One of the Hebrew words translated as ‘presence’ in the Old Testament is *‘paniyim’*, which can also be translated as *‘face’*. This reveals something of the nearness of God’s presence and the close, personal encounter we can have with God face-to-face. *‘Present’* is a wonderfully rich word that has all sorts of meanings.

Christmas presents are special gifts and Jesus is the self-gift of the Father to the world. But to be present also means to be here, to be near, to turn up, to exist in the now and to be accessible. Isn’t it wonderful that Jesus’ coming means all these things as well?

Annie says: When I look at Jesus’ life and ministry, I’m struck by how totally present he was to everyone and in everything. Whether in prayer to the Father, in conversation with the people he encountered, in proclaiming the kingdom, in ministering to people’s needs, in listening to their concerns, in suffering, in dying and in rising, Jesus was fully present in each particular moment.

Christmas offers us an opportunity to practise being fully present in this particular moment, to particular people especially family, in a particular place, without thinking of what comes next? Let us accept this moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full?”

As all dads know that, if it wasn’t for Christmas as well as Fathers’ Day and birthdays, there would probably be no reason for *aftershave* to exist!!!

Sid tells his friend Tony that he has bought his brother an artificial leg for Christmas.

Tony: Is that the main present you’re giving him?

Sid: Of course not. It is only a stocking filler!!

