

Pew Reflections

The Fourth Sunday of Advent **– Sunday 18 December 2022**

- Isaiah 7.10-16; Psalm 80.1-7, 17-19; Romans 1.1-7; Matthew 1.18-25

They shall name him Emmanuel, which means, 'God is with us'. What a profound concept – that God should take on human form and become one of us – what the poet John Betjeman called 'the most tremendous tale of all' in his poem, 'Christmas'. We wait in anticipation for the Incarnation when God comes to us wearing the clothes of humanity, and allows us to become like God by participating in God's life. Alleluya! Salvation is at hand!

- Pray this week that you may become more and more like God himself by following the example of Jesus.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea, remembering especially today the staff and students at Newton Theological College in Popondetta.

Text: Robert McLean© Anglican Board of Mission, 2022

Reflection

Even when we are jaded, fatigued or weary, this time of year seeps into our spirits with a certain something. Why is that?
A courageous couple disregard social and cultural codes, committing to God and to love. In the likelihood of shame and dishonour, poverty and rejection in a very regulated society, Mary courageously accepts her calling from God and, risking rejection, shares her news with her fiancé. What a woman!
Joseph, 'who always did what was right', courageously listens to an 'angel of the Lord', chooses to go beyond societal codes, and honours, marries and protects Mary and the baby. What a man!
Through their courageous commitment as a family, they audaciously listened and responded quickly to political dishonesty, wisdom from culturally and religiously different leaders, choosing to flee as refugees to a foreign country, remain alert and responsive, returning to a different town and community in safety. What a couple!
Courage can be fatiguing and weary-making. It can often be viewed by jaded others, as foolish and extravagant squandering of personal resources. Yet, there is a gentle warming of the soul when enduring audacity greets the shining light of courageous integrity, moving happiness to deep joy. Mary and Joseph experienced it. The visitors from the east experienced it.

Let us listen audaciously, move courageously towards the Light, and enjoy this timeless joy.

May courageous joy seep into our spirits once more.

How happy they were, what joy was theirs, when they saw the star! Matthew 2:10

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HOLY INNOCENTS ANGLICAN CHURCH BELAIR

Readings - Sunday 18 December - Fourth Sunday in Advent

Sentence

A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel: God with us. Matthew 1.23

Collect

Gracious God,
you chose the virgin Mary, by your grace,
to be the mother of our Lord and Saviour:
so fill us with your grace,
that with her we may rejoice in your salvation,
and in all things embrace your will;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 7.10-16

¹⁰ Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹ Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. ¹² But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test. ¹³ Then Isaiah said: 'Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. ¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and

choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

For the word of the Lord, Thanks be to God.

Psalm 80.1-7, 17-19

- ¹ Hear, O Shepherd of Israel,
you that led Joseph like a flock:
**you that are enthroned upon the cherubim,
shine out in glory;**
- ² Before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh:
stir up your power, and come to save us.
- ³ Restore us again, O Lord of hosts:
**show us the light of your countenance,
and we shall be saved.**
- ⁴ O Lord God of hosts:
how long will you be angry at your people's prayer?
- ⁵ You have fed them with the bread of tears:
and given them tears to drink in good measure.
- ⁶ You have made us the victim of our neighbours:
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.
- ⁷ Restore us again, O Lord of hosts:
**show us the light of your countenance,
and we shall be saved.**
- ¹⁷ Let your power rest on the man at your right hand:
on that son of man
whom you made so strong for yourself.
- ¹⁸ And so we shall not turn back from you:
give us life, and we will call upon your name.
- ¹⁹ Restore us again, O Lord of hosts:
**show us the light of your countenance,
and we shall be saved.**

2nd Reading: Romans 1.1-7

¹ Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand

through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³ the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, ⁶ including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, ⁷ To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
For the word of the Lord, Thanks be to God.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 1.18-25

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' ²² All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³ 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.' ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

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