

God is with us... all the time

4th Sunday of Advent – Year B

2 SM 7:1-5, 8B-12, 14A, 16 , PS 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29, ROM 16:25-27, LK 1:26-38



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12/20/2020

“Here I am living in a house of cedar while the ark of God dwells in a tent.” Our first reading has King David questioning the accommodations of God in the world. The wonder of our scripture is that it can be read at so many different levels, each fitting to where we are at on the journey.

What accommodations do we provide for God in our world? Mary, in Luke’s Gospel, said, “May it be done unto me according to your word.” She accepted the mystery and intimacy of conceiving a son. I cannot help but think of Mary’s time of confinement and ours. In our time of Covid-19 gestation, what will we deliver?

God does not abandon us; we are after all, created in His image and likeness. So, in these times of pandemic, our pattern of worship has changed. Many cannot gather because of health risk. Knowing that God does not abandon, into what new pastures has the Shepherd led us? Have we let the isolation become our teacher? What have we learned along the way?

Renata and I are retired and are not facing the uncertainty of employment and feeding those at our table. May our community prayer and resource go out to those who fall asleep and wake with the question of, ‘how to feed family?’ There is an uncertainty that pervades everything. Mary felt uncertainty. She prayed. She entered the uncertainty with the confidence that God would lead her family.

Perhaps Advent and Covid-19 teach us to put aside our self-reliance and trust ourselves to a higher power. God is not sheltered by a tent, but in the incarnation of humankind. Finding and knowing this, in the depth of our prayer, is the fruit of Advent and the Joy of Christmas. God is with us... all the time. All the time... God is with us.

*Fr. Richard Rohr, comments, "Christianity's true and unique story line has always been incarnation. That means that the *spirit* nature of reality (the spiritual, the immaterial, the formless) and the *material* nature of reality (the physical, that which we can see and touch) are one. They have always been one, ever since the Big Bang took place 13.7 billion years ago. The incarnation did not just happen when Jesus was born, although that is when we became aware of the human incarnation of God in Jesus.*

Our outer world and its inner significance must come together for there to be any wholeness and holiness. The result is both deep joy and a resounding sense of coherent beauty. What was personified in the body of Jesus was a manifestation of this one universal truth: matter is, and has always been, the hiding place for Spirit, forever offering itself to be discovered anew. Perhaps this is what Jesus means when he says, "I am the gate" (John 10:7).

This means that everything you have ever seen with your physical eyes is the mystery of incarnation. The Christian word we give to that is *the Christ*, which comes from the word Messiah, or the Anointed One, used by Jewish people. The Anointed One is the one who would come to reveal what God is doing, everywhere and all the time. For Christians, that became manifested in Jesus of Nazareth."

With 4 advent candles lit, we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus. It was he that pointed beyond himself to the Father. It was he that proclaimed the Good News that, "God is with us... all the time. All the time... God is with us."

Merry Christmas... Frank

References

All scripture quotations are taken from. (1987). *The New American Bible, Revised edition*. USCCB.

Note: Due to Covid-19 this homily was not delivered in person but posted on the St. Thomas More Catholic Student Parish website.

Knowing that God does not abandon, into what new pastures has the Shepherd led us? Have we let the isolation become our teacher? What have we learned along the way? I would be interested in knowing how God has touched your life in the past 9 months. If you have a story that you would like to share, email me at frank.sila@sttomskazoo.org.