

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

1st Reading: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16 | **2nd Reading:** Romans 16:25-27 | **Gospel:** Luke 1:26-38

GROW: During Advent, we await the One who is perfect grace, light, and joy. The Christ Child's arrival during a time when darkness has been increasing each day, and our anticipation of that arrival, emphasize his salvific role. For if even the smallest light is a glimmer of hope in the night, how much more is Christ's perfect and all-consuming light a life-saving flare in the darkness of sin and death. As we hear the angel Gabriel say of Christ in his visitation to Mary: "He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High ... and of his kingdom there will be no end." Emmanuel, God with us, is the reason for our hope, and the reason for our joy.

GO: Despite our best intentions, we may get a little swallowed up in the commercialism of Christmas. But this last week of Advent feels like a chance to reorder our minds and hearts. One way to do this is by focusing on the "O Antiphons," prayed during the Church's evening prayer from December 17-23. Each antiphon begins with the word "O," and is followed by a title for the Messiah, found in Scripture, and a petition for him to come and save his people. Although this may sound overly complicated, you most likely know of these without realizing it: they have been transposed into the verses of the hymn, *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*. Today's first reading speaks of David, who thought he could build a place for God to dwell, but he couldn't. Instead, for *us*, whom God created and fashioned in his own image, God created a dwelling for his Son, so that he might enter into our human history as one of us; and in doing so, dwell among us and within us forever. Come, Lord Jesus.

INVITE: How do we respond to God's presence? Mary's fiat shows us that "something more than deterministic genetics, effort of will, and the maturation of reason is required in response to God's initiative, in order to reach our full human potential." There was no duplicity in her "yes" to the invitation offered her by the angel. In a similar but altogether different fashion, we are presented with a myriad of opportunities to give small yeses to God's invitations ... to attend peaceably to the irritable spouse coming home from work, to calm the quarrelsome child, to rise above the disappointment of chores not being done, to mediation with confrontational coworkers, to respond to impulses toward more time for prayer and a healthier lifestyle, to the creative discipline for quality time with the family.

Mary's example gives us Advent hope that the coming of Jesus into the manger of our hearts can — again or for the first time — be a game-changing reality of faith, not just the annual sentimental commemoration of a religious tradition or holiday cheer.

Let us sing with the universal Church: *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*.

--Fr. Anthony Ahamefule