

2019 December 22

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Readings:

First: Isaiah 7.10-14, "I will not put the Lord to the test." (12b)

Psalm: 24, "Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?" (3a)

Second: Romans 1.1-7, "Through Christ we have received grace and apostleship." (5a)

Gospel: Matthew 1.18-24, "The child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit." (20c)

"Do not be afraid"

The Archangel Gabriel announced to Mary the coming of Jesus to the world through her. Every greeting connected with Jesus was similar to, 'do not be afraid'. It was said to Mary the Virgin by the Archangel, to Joseph her husband in the dream, and to the shepherds on Christmas night by the angels. Jesus always used to say to his followers 'Peace be with you. Peace happens in the absence of fear.

We are invited to be fearless or to be at peace because we have a Redeemer, the Emmanuel, God with us, who is the Good News to the world for all times. We the followers of Jesus are privileged to carry, and to announce that good news in our time. That is our vocation and mission. Let us feel proud about it and do it! In today's reading to Ahaz the desperate king of Israel and to his people a message of deliverance is given, the promise of Emmanuel! St. Paul in his exhortation to the Romans, delivers the same message, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ".

Mary and Joseph received this comforting message 'not to be afraid' at the most critical and troubled time in their lives. Ever after they received this message their life was filled with uncertainties and hardships. However, they were not afraid; peace accompanied them all through their lives. There were moments and days and months of uncertainty and confusion. According to worldly standards life never was glorious for them. But they were at peace at all times.

All of us go through situations of fear, trembling, doubt and uncertainty, hopelessness and even despair. We wish and pray if only an angel would appear and speak, if only the Lord gives us a dream, a sign! We desperately look for a blessing, a word of comfort and consolation, of reassurance; we look for some light in the thickness of the dark night of the soul. In all such situations, the message of Christmas, the presence of God with us, the Emmanuel, should bombard in our innermost heart. It will happen, it will be our experience if only we care to go with Jesus, carry him with us, and give him to those we come across. Let him reign supreme in our hearts! Let us keep praying, *Come, Lord Jesus, take possession of my heart, stay with me, and I love you!*

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*May the joy of the Angels
in the message they brought,
The wisdom of the wise men when they reached
Whom they sought,
And the love and peace of the shepherds
When they found where Jesus lay*

Bring to you the greatest of Blessings

This Holy Christmas

And through the New Year!



Merry Christmas

and a happy New Year

Fr. George

Christmas 2019

