

## Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 23, 2007

*Isaiah 7:10-14; Romans 1:1-7; Gospel: Matthew 1:18-24*

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As we enter into the last days of Advent, the fourth candle is lit and expectancy fills the air. As each candle has been spent, I am reminded of the different stages in the spiritual journey. At the beginning the light is bright but superficial. A passing breeze can blow it out, as can the worries of life. As the wax melts from the heat of the flame, the whole candle seems to glow from within. Advent is the time for this going deeper, letting our resistances to God melt away, as we delve deeper into the to mystery of all the ways God comes into our daily lives and of God's desire to dwell within us and among us. We couldn't create this kind of God! Our imaginations cannot hold such infinite love and mystery! Our eyes of faith are slowly opened to recognize God who is Emmanuel. We are tempted to look for assurances, but instead we are invited to say a trusting "Yes" to the ways of God in our lives.

The Sunday readings talk about falsely looking for signs and having comforting dreams. Why is Ahaz criticized by the prophet and Joseph's need satisfied? It seems that Ahaz wants signs *instead of* making an act of faith, whereas Joseph was a man of deep faith and trust in God. Both receive the same response: God is doing the impossible for us! You *merely* need to say "Yes" to your part in the plan. *Merely*: as if it were easy!

Think of what Mary's "Yes" had already cost her at this point in the Christmas story! It is difficult to imagine the depth of Mary's feelings about Joseph's lack of comprehension. He was such a good man, a strength for her, but how could he possibly guess and accept what God was doing in her! God rewarded her faith by the angel's

assurance to Joseph. Notice that her fiat accomplished something in him. Mary's "Yes" and her trust that God would be faithful to her and protect her, sustained her, made her pregnant with life, and overflowed into Joseph,.

Is this not true in our own lives? If we sustain our "Yes" to God through the challenges of life, we too are protected and strengthened by God's continuous, unrelenting "Yes" to us. We too bring to life the deep light within us for the world to see. Paul tells us that we are called to belong to Jesus Christ and to be holy. This is what it will look like! God awaits our "Yes," our willingness to "let it be done to me," so that everyone can come to know Emmanuel. This is God's Advent! Keep God waiting no longer!

### **Advent Prayer**

**Comfort, be comforted O my people  
for God's glad ecstasy is  
new made flesh  
by human yes.**

**Through earth's long mourning  
God waits again...near at hand  
to birth the earth  
afresh  
in celestial...unfolding  
of Christ's transforming yes.**

**Yet all depends on still small voice:  
"Be it done in me...  
as you would have it be."  
Then God's glad life  
now gifts  
uplifts, heals, enfolds,  
newborn Christmas soul  
in swaddling delight.  
-Christine Schenk, CSJ**