

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 18, 2022

Gospel: (Matthew 1:18-24)

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he *will save his people from their sins.*” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord said through the prophet: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means “*God is with us.*” When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.

Reflection:

The gospel for this Fourth Sunday of Advent helps us to reflect on the relationship between Jesus’ conception by the Holy Spirit and his birth, as both are clothed in the mystery of God’s revelation and presence to us. Two names are given the One incarnated in Mary’s womb: Jesus, meaning “*God saves the people from their sins*” and Emmanuel, meaning “*God is with us.*” The names reveal that the presence of God among us is experienced most profoundly in the forgiveness of our sins. This is the deepest mystery that we celebrate as we see how the joy of Christmas connects and points to the triumph of Easter. Not even the compassionate, righteous Joseph could imagine such a merciful work of God. It is to dream the impossible: God with us (*Emmanuel*) not as a condemnation but as Savior(*Jesus*). (Living Liturgy, p.18)

Vincentian Meditation:

The mystery of the birth of Jesus is supremely a mystery of love. The purpose of the coming of Christ was to speak to us humans about the love which the great, eternal and all-powerful God has for us short-lived, weak, fragile and sinful human beings. A newborn infant calls forth from our hearts love. The language of God at Christmas is one of love. Our vocation as Vincentians is to continue learning the language of love, not only at Christmas but throughout our lives. It is the language that we must learn to speak if we wish to draw near to the poor. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p.509)

Discussion: (*Share thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How have we learned the language of love this Advent?

Closing Prayer:

As we prepare for Christmas we pray for the poor and lonely,
-may our lives be a sign of faith.
We pray for those who do not know that God is our “Savior”,
-may our lives be a sign of hope.
We pray for those who do not know that God is “Emmanuel”,
-may our lives be a sign of charity. Amen

