

The Fourth Week of Advent, December 18, 2016

Mary Beth O'Brien - Lady of Charity

READINGS:

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

Today our attention turns from the events at the end of time and the prophecies keeping the hope of a Savior alive in ancient Israel to the events immediately preceding the birth of Jesus. We wait in the darker, colder days of the year, looking for the light of the coming Messiah and the fullness of the Kingdom of God. We wait and pray. "Come Lord Jesus."

Reflection:

Isaiah, the greatest of prophets appeared at a critical time of Israel's history. Isaiah received his divine summons to be the ambassador of the Most High. Isaiah proposed the coming of Emmanuel (meaning "God is with us"). The Holy Spirit connects the old to the new in Mary and her child. Jesus will be the long awaited Savior. The church has always followed St. Matthew in seeing the fulfillment of this verse in Christ and his Virgin Mother. The mystery of Christmas is the celebration of the call of humanity to share in the eternal life of God. We are invited "to share in the divinity of Christ, Who humbled himself to share in our humanity." The first to acknowledge and to welcome Him into this world was the Virgin Mary of Nazareth. She became, and continues to be God's primary partner in the restoration of humanity, and we who are baptized as adopted sons and daughters of God are called to share in the delicate work of restoring humanity to the image and likeness of Christ. Christmas fulfills the promise of Bethlehem. Jesus' coming is a new covenant and the completion of God's saving plan in the future.

Prayer:

What St. Vincent de Paul wrote in a letter a few days before Christmas in 1656 is apropos: *"Here we have nothing new except the mystery (of Christmas) which is drawing near and which will make us see the Savior of the world reduced almost to nothing under the form of an infant. I hope that we will be gathered together at the foot of the Crib to ask Him to draw us after Him in His abasement. It is with this desire and in His love that I remain, your devoted confrere."*

God of light, guide me to be your light for others.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Try this today:

Is there someone in mind who before Christmas would feel less hungry, less alone, less unloved because of a kindness on your part?