



December 20, 2015

Fourth Sunday of Advent

...for now his greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth; he shall be peace.
Micah 5:3-4a



Dear Friends;

Once, there was a King who had no sons to succeed him. So he posted a sign inviting all the young men in his kingdom to become his adopted son and rule after him. There were only two qualities necessary. The boy must love both God and neighbor deeply. A young peasant boy felt moved to apply, but he lacked decent clothes for an interview with the king. After some time he was able to save enough money for the clothes. As the boy got near to the palace he came upon a shivering old man begging for clothes. The boy was moved with pity and gave the man the clothes that he brought for the interview. Then the boy approached the palace wondering if he would be admitted wearing rags. The boy did gain admittance. When he came into the throne room he was shocked. On the throne sat the shivering old man. The king smiled and said, "Welcome, my son."

Like the king in our story God has chosen to disguise himself as one of us. We profess that Jesus is the human face of God—God in our own flesh and blood. The word we use to describe this process is "incarnation." Literally this means "enfleshment." This process began in the womb of the Virgin Mother who said yes to the Word. But it also continues in us who believe that God chooses to live in and among us. When we show compassion and mercy to others we become the fleshly body of Christ. And when we administer the medicine of mercy to the wounded in body and spirit, it is Christ Jesus who we are treating.

Mary demonstrates that the Word has indeed become part of her deepest self. She dares to embark on a journey alone to visit her kinswoman. This was unheard of at this time. Women and especially young girls never went anywhere unchaperoned by a group of women and unprotected by male family members. Travel was dangerous and a young girl alone risked damaging her reputation and that of her family. Trusting in the power of the Holy One, that she carried within her, she courageously travels to meet Elizabeth.

Elizabeth who has had the miracle of pregnancy at an old age rejoices in receiving Mary. She recognizes that there is something different about Mary. Mary radiates the compassionate merciful love of God. It is so obvious that Elizabeth's baby who will be John the Baptizer does somersaults in her womb. Mary has become the Ark of a New Covenant. The Ark of the Old Covenant was a golden chest that contained the stone tablets of the Law that Moses received. But Mary is a living container of the author of the new law—the mercy of God. The jumping of John in the womb of Elizabeth recalls how King David joyously danced before the Ark when it came into Jerusalem.

Like Mary we need to say yes to the Word of God spoken in Jesus. We need to allow his story to become a living reality in our hearts—to become "God-bearers." We must be courageous in going out to those who are near or far as we travel the paths of time. We need to share the stories of how God has been working in the midst of our lives. Then, others like Elizabeth and John the Baptist, can thrill at how God is at work in this time and in this place! Come Lord Jesus, into our hearts, our families, our community and our world!

Peace,

Fr. Ron

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