

Gratitude Foundation



*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

Fourth Sunday of Advent—Year A

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“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”

(1 Thess: 5:18)

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Reading 1

Isaiah 7:10-14

The LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying:
Ask for a sign from the LORD, your God;
let it be deep as the netherworld, or high as the sky!
But Ahaz answered,
"I will not ask! I will not tempt the LORD!"
Then Isaiah said:
Listen, O house of David!
Is it not enough for you to weary people,
must you also weary my God?
Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign:
the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,
and shall name him Emmanuel.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6.

R. (7c and 10b) **Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory.**
The LORD's are the earth and its fullness;
the world and those who dwell in it.
For he founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the rivers.
R. **Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory.**

Who can ascend the mountain of the LORD?
or who may stand in his holy place?
One whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean,
who desires not what is vain.
R. **Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory.**

He shall receive a blessing from the LORD,
a reward from God his savior.
Such is the race that seeks for him,
that seeks the face of the God of Jacob.
R. **Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory.**

Reading 2

Romans 1:1-7

Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus,
called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God,
which he promised previously through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,
the gospel about his Son, descended from David according to the flesh,
but established as Son of God in power
according to the Spirit of holiness
through resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.
Through him we have received the grace of apostleship,
to bring about the obedience of faith,
for the sake of his name, among all the Gentiles,
among whom are you also, who are called to belong to Jesus Christ;
to all the beloved of God in Rome, called to be holy.
Grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Alleluia

Matthew 1:23

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**
The virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel.
R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

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 had 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.

Exegesis

Isaiah 7:10-14

The Prophet Isaiah begins his book as follows: “The vision which Isaiah, son of Amos, had concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, Kings of Judah.” Through extra biblical sources experts can ascertain the dates that the kings reigned, Jotham (742-735, Ahaz (735-715) and Hezekiah (715-354). Isaiah reveals the year that he experienced his call to ministry as the year that King Uzziah died, which was 742 B.C. Experts also suggest that Isaiah remained in his role as a prophet until 701 when Jerusalem was under the siege of the Assyrians.

The dates are important in that it gives a backdrop for the political and religious environment in which Isaiah lived and exercised his role as a prophet for Yahweh. It was a time of great civil unrest. The Northern Kingdom fell to the Assyrians in the year 722.

When Isaiah was called, there was widespread infidelity to Yahweh. The prophet says it quite succinctly: “Ah! Sinful nation, people laden with wickedness, evil race, corrupt children! They have forsaken the Lord, spurned the Holy One of Israel, apostatized.” (Is 1: 4). Despite their infidelity, the prophet always holds fast to the faithfulness of Yahweh, to His infinite love and mercy. “Come now, let us set things right, says the Lord: Though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow; though they be crimson red they may become white as wool.” (Is 1: 18). As Isaiah links his mission, his calling, to Yahweh, Himself, it gives him the authority that he needs to deliver a message that might be difficult for many to hear. It not only gave Isaiah credibility, but it would give him courage and perseverance in a long and difficult battle against compromised religious practices. Isaiah, himself, has a feeling of unworthiness as he stands before Yahweh. Nevertheless, his purification occurs swiftly when the seraphim press a glowing ember from the altar against his mouth.

The theophany that Isaiah experienced as Yahweh called him to ministry certainly gave him the courage to persevere during this challenging time for Israel and Judah. His powerful prophecies helped to ignite the great religious reforms under the reign of King Hezekiah in 715. Many years passed, however, between Isaiah’s calling in 742 and the beginning of Hezekiah’s reforms.

Chapter Seven begins as follows: “In the days of Ahaz, king of Judah...” (Is 7: 1). Ahaz ruled as king of Judah from 735-715 B.C. The current crisis is the fact that king Ahaz refused to enter into an alliance with Aram (Syria) to fight against the aggression of the Assyrians. Some suggest that the prophesy of Isaiah relative to the birth of Immanuel is the birth of Hezekiah who would become king and rescue Israel. (See 2 Kgs 18: 1-6). Hezekiah was with the Lord and remained loyal to the Lord, as he led Israel away from idols and encouraged them to turn back to the Lord. The Gospels reveal a much deeper meaning of the prophesy, however, it is the prophesy of Christ the long-awaited Messiah.

Therefore, the Lord himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel. The Hebrew word that is translated as *Lord* in this verse is *Adon*. The Hebrew word for *sign* is *ot*. *Ot* can represent something very mundane such as a banner or sigh. In addition, *ot* is often used to describe a miracle, e.g., a visible manifestation of God’s power. The original Hebrew text includes the exclamation *hinneh* immediately after the colon, which is translated *behold*. *Hinneh* often introduces a great sign or a great theophany. Both Matthew and Luke include the attention-grabbing word at the beginning of their quotations of this verse. (See Matt 1:23; Luke 1:31).

The most significant word in this pericope is *Immanuel*. *Immanuel* in the most literal sense is translated *with us is God*. The Gospels offer the translation *God is with us*. From an etymological perspective *im* is translated *with*, and *El* is translated *God*. The question is *how is God with us?* *Im* (*with*) is obviously a very common word, in fact, it appears 13,978 times in the Hebrew OT. *Im* most often describes the most basic understanding of being *with* as in *present*. It first appears in Genesis 3:6 describing Adam who was *with* (*im*) Eve. Relative to

Exegesis (Continued)

Isaiah 7:10-14

God the word appears numerous times as a promise to be *with* humanity, first in Genesis 31:3. “Then the Lord said to Jacob, ‘Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with (*im*) you.’” (Gen 31: 3). In addition to the most common understanding of being *with* someone, physically and spiritually, it also can suggest a notion of *solidarity* with a person or persons, or *equality* with. When Jesus walked into the waters of the Jordan River, He entered into solidarity with our sinful human condition. At the Ascension the parting words of the Risen Lord included the promise, “And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.” (Mt 28: 20).

Exegesis (Continued)

Psalm 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6.

Psalm 24 consists of 10 verses and is titled *The Glory of God in Procession to Zion*. Verses 1 and 2 proclaim the Glory of the Lord, the creator of all things and the One who conquers darkness and chaos. Verses 3 through 6 proclaim a purification necessary to stand before the Lord.

The LORD's are the earth and its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it. For he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers. The Hebrew word that is translated as *Lord* in this verse and throughout this psalm is *Yahweh*. The Hebrew word that is translated as *fullness* in this verse is *melo*. *Melo* means *that which fills it*, i.e., all of creation.

Who can ascend the mountain of the LORD? Or who may stand in his holy place? One whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean, who desires not what is vain. Psalm 15 precedes these verses with a similar message. “Lord, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy mountain? Whoever walks without blame, doing what is right...” (Ps 15: 1-2). Our pericope adds the notion of ascending the mountain. The Hebrew word that is translated as *ascend* is *alah*. *Alah* is sometimes used to describe the *offering up* of a sacrifice. Ascending the mountain requires choice and action, movement toward God, climbing the *ladder* to God.

He shall receive a blessing from the LORD, a reward from God his savior. Such is the race that seeks for him, that seeks the face of the God of Jacob. The Hebrew word that is translated as *blessing* in verse is *berakah*. *Berakah* is a very common word that appears numerous times in the OT. *Berakah* suggests a special power or favor given by God. The connotation of *gift* or *grace* is implied. Lord promised His blessing to all the nations of the earth through His servant Abraham. The psalmist is speaking of the fulfillment of that promise. “I (Yahweh) will bless you (Abraham) abundantly and make your descendants as countless as the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore; your descendants shall take possession of the gates of their enemies, and in your descendants all the nations of the earth shall find blessing; all this because you obeyed my command.” (Gen 22: 17-18). The Hebrew word that is translated in this verse as *reward* is *sedaquah*. In this verse of the ESV *sedaquah* is translated as *righteousness*. It can also be translated as *justice*, *honesty*, *faithfulness* or *prosperity*. *Sedaquah* is translated as *justice* in *Isaiah*. “I am bringing on My *justice* (*sedaquah*), it is not far off, My salvation shall not tarry; I will put salvation in Zion, for Israel My glory.” (Is 46: 13). The Hebrew word that is translated as *race* in this verse is *dor*. *Dor* is translated as *generation* in the ESV. *Dor* describes a *generation* or *multiple generations of a people*. Psalm 27:8 and 105:4 repeat the exhortation to seek the face of God. “Come, says my heart, ‘seek God’s face;’ Your face, Lord, do I seek.” (Ps 27: 8). “Rely on the mighty Lord; constantly seek His face.” (Ps 105: 4).

Exegesis (Continued)

Romans 1:1-7

Scholars agree that Paul wrote his *Letter to the Romans* in late 57 A.D. It is believed that he wrote it from Corinth near the end of his third missionary journey. There was an established Jewish community in Rome, with at least twelve active synagogues. There also was the presence of a Christian community, obviously, as Paul is directing his letter to them. It is further believed that the nascent Christian Church in Rome was centered among the synagogues. It is important to note that *God-fearing* Gentiles often attended synagogue gatherings. The Roman historian Suetonius wrote of an edict declared by the Emperor Claudius in the year 49 that ordered the expulsion of Jews from Rome who were proclaiming Christ as the Messiah. The historical origin and the founders of the Church in Rome, remains a mystery.

Paul was born in Tarsus, in the Roman province of Syria. The exact date of his birth is unknown, but it is estimated that he was born near the time of the birth of Jesus. Paul was a well-educated Greek-speaking Jew. *Paul* is the Greek (Hellenistic) equivalent of *Saul*, his given Jewish name. Paul was a Jew and a Pharisee. He was blessed to study under the leading Pharisee, Gamaliel. Paul attests to his devout Jewish education. "I progressed in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my race, since I was even more a zealot for my ancestral traditions." (Gal 1: 14). Paul would have known the Hebrew scriptures well, and consequently the Hebrew language. Paul was raised in a Greek speaking area. He wrote in a style of Greek that is referred to as *Koine* or *common* Greek, as distinguished from the more formal and sophisticated *literary* Greek of the time. He understood that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Hebrew scriptures, the scriptures that he would have memorized as a boy. To that end he quotes Hebrew scripture on sixty different occasions in Romans, beginning with the second verse of Chapter One.

This Liturgical Year, with Cycle A readings, we will be reading often from *Romans* (23 times). *Romans* is the longest and the most systematic of all of Paul's letters. Romans opens with an introduction or a greeting, which is our selected passage for this liturgy.

Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised previously through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, the gospel about his Son, descended from David according to the flesh, but established as Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness through resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord. The Greek word that is translated in this verse as *slave* is *doulos*. *Doulos* means *bondservant* and is often translated as *servant*. Paul would have been very familiar with the OT custom of referring to individuals as a *servant of Yahweh*. "Do not hide Your face from me; do not repel Your servant in anger." (Ps 27: 9). "Let Your face shine on Your servant; save me in Your kindness." (Ps 31: 17). The Greek word that is translated in this verse as *called* is *kletos*. *Kletos* can also be translated as *invited, welcomed* or *summoned*. It is most often translated as *called*. There is a suggestion of a personal nature to the call, e.g., called by name. This is certainly the situation with the *calling* of Paul by the Risen Lord. St. Paul introduces his *Letter to the Corinthians* as follows: "Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God..." (1 Cor 1: 1). Paul introduces his *Letter to the Galatians* as follows: "Paul, an apostle not from human beings nor through a human being but through Christ Jesus and God the Father who raised Him from the dead." (Gal 1: 1). Paul was confident that God called him from the womb. "But when God, who from my mother's womb had set me apart and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son to me, so that I may proclaim Him to the Gentiles." (Gal 1: 15-16). The Greek word for *apostle* is *apostolos*. *Apostolos* describes a messenger or an ambassador, especially describing one being sent on a mission. It has a category that had been previously reserved for the twelve summoned by Jesus by name for this special role. Paul takes on the specific role of being set apart for the Gospel as he is chosen and sent off with Barnabas on his first missionary journey. "While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" (Acts 13: 2). "Therefore, the Lord

Exegesis (Continued)

Romans 1:1-7

Himself will give you a sign: the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name Him Immanuel.” (Is 7: 14). “For whatever was written previously was written for our instruction, that by endurance and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.” (Rom 15: 4). “Now to him who can strengthen you, according to my Gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret for long ages but now manifested through the prophetic writings and according to the command of the eternal God, made known to all nations to bring about the obedience of faith, to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ be glory forever and ever, Amen.” (Rom 16: 26).

Through him we have received the grace of apostleship, to bring about the obedience of faith, for the sake of his name, among all the Gentiles, among whom are you also, who are called to belong to Jesus Christ; to all the beloved of God in Rome, called to be holy. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Apostleship is a gift and a calling by Christ, Himself. Everyone, however, is called to belong to Christ. “They (demons) will fight with the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them, for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings, and those with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.” (Rev 17: 14).

Through these first seven verses, in two long sentences, St. Paul establishes the Gospel as the fulfillment of the OT, Jesus as the Messiah who descended from the lineage of David, Christ as Glorified, that Paul was called and commissioned by the Risen Lord as an apostle, that the Gentiles, too, belong to Christ and that all people are called to be holy.

Exegesis (Continued)

Matthew 1:18-24

Matthew begins his Gospel with the genealogy of Jesus. Matthew seeks to emphasize in his Gospel that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament and not the replacement of it. Accordingly, he begins his Gospel with the genealogy, establishing Jesus as the fulfillment of the promise of the long-awaited Messiah from the lineage of King David. “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” (Mt 1: 1). From the lineage Matthew moves into the birth narrative, which is our pericope.

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. The Greek word that is translated in this verse as birth is genesis. Genesis is the word that is translated as genealogy in verse one. Genesis ties the birth of Jesus with the genealogy, and ultimately with the first book of the bible, Genesis, and the story of creation. In fulfillment of the promises of old, something new is being born, a new creation is coming into human existence, through the power of the same Holy Spirit, that hovered over the waters of creation in Genesis, Chapter One. The Greek word that is translated as Christ is Christos, which means the anointed one. The Hebrew equivalent is Mashiah (Messiah), the anointed one. Although most ancient manuscripts read Jesus Christ, some contain the definite article the, rendering the translation, Jesus the Christ, or Jesus the Messiah.

The Greek word that is translated as betrothed in this verse is *mnesteuo*. Whereas *mnesteuo* means betrothed as translated, the understanding of the promise of marriage was quite different in ancient Palestine than our modern-day Judeo-Christian understanding.

Exegesis (Continued)

Matthew 1:18-24

Marriage was more of a legal/contractual agreement. That marital contractual agreement began with the betrothal. It was an agreement that could only be broken by death or divorce. It was customary for the betrothed bride to live in her father's home for up to a year before the actual marriage ceremony and the consummation of the marriage.

Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame,

decided to divorce her quietly. It is important to note that Matthew calls Joseph *her husband*. The beginning of the marriage contract was betrothal. Joseph and Mary are husband and wife.

The Law was very strict relative to the *betrothal/marriage* contract. The penalty for nonperformance and infidelity in many instances was death. "But if the charge is true, and evidence of the girl's virginity is not found, they shall bring the girl to the entrance of her father's house and there her townspeople shall stone her to death, because she has committed a crime against Israel by her unchasteness in her father's house." (Deut 22: 20).

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. The next step in the marital process was for Joseph to move Mary from her father's home to his home. The entire Gospel to this point has established Jesus as the Son of David, as Joseph is the son of David. In the sentence that follows Matthew is proclaiming Jesus to be the Son of God. As in *Genesis*, the Holy Spirit is the source of *birth/genesis*.

"She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." The Greek word that is translated as *Jesus* is *Iesous*. *Iesous* is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew/Aramaic name *Yehoshua/Joshua*. *Yehoshua* means *Yahweh saves*. Following the experience of Pentecost, Peter stood before the Sanhedrin and proclaimed: "He (Jesus) is the stone rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved." (Acts 4: 11-12).

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had 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." Throughout his Gospel, Matthew emphasizes the reality that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. In addition to this passage, see Matt 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:56 and 27:9. For a discussion of the quotation from the Prophet Isaiah see the exegesis above.

When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. The Greek word that is translated as *angel* is *angelos*, which means *messenger* or *envoy*. The Greek word translated in this verse as *commanded* is *prostasso*. *Prostasso*, in addition to *command* or *order*, can mean *to instruct*. Verse 25 concludes the birth story. "He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named Him Jesus." (Mt 1: 25). The naming of the Child Jesus by Joseph established Jesus as a descendant of David before the Law.

Reflection

May you be filled with the Love, Joy and Peace that Jesus came to bring to earth this Christmas Season. Three years ago as I was praying with the Scripture for last Sunday, Gaudete Sunday, I had a major spiritual breakthrough that I feel called to share with you.

Joy is always the theme of the third Sunday of Advent. We are called to rejoice in anticipation of the coming of our savior at Christmas. As I was praying with the scripture during the week I was haunted by images of very sad people that I have known over the years. Some I have counseled. Some were merely acquaintances. I wondered why God was showing me these people, and why now. All of them at least claimed to be atheist. All had distanced themselves from God in a very pronounced way. The people that came to mind were the exact opposite of what I would call joyful.

I often try to look for the polar opposite of a concept to help me understand the concept more deeply. As I was seeing these people as the opposite of joy, I was trying to articulate in my mind what it was exactly. It was a deep sadness, but more than that. It was a deep-rooted anger, but even more than that. As I looked into their eyes it was an emptiness that I was seeing. It was a lack of something that should be there.

The message became clear to me... God wants the opposite of this... God wants us to be filled with His Joy! I immediately recalled the words of Jesus as He walked out into the Garden of Gethsemani, "I have told you this so that My Joy might be in you and your joy be complete." (Jn 15:11) Jesus had just talked at length about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He prayed that the indwelling of His abiding love would live within us. He gives us the beautiful metaphor of the Vine and the Branches. He called us to remain connected to the vine, the source of life. It is in this connection that we will bear fruit. That fruit will be divine life becoming flesh in our world, the incarnation of God's love.

The fruits of the Holy Spirit are love, **joy**, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Gal. 5:22) The opposite of love is not hate; it is apathy, literally a lack of love. The opposite of peace is not war; it is a lack of unity that should be there. The opposite of joy is not sadness but a lack of joy, in fact, emptiness. It occurred to me that the exact opposite of each of the fruits of the Spirit is emptiness.

Many of the images of scripture speak of the emptiness of the human condition without God. The Prodigal Son traveled away from the father's love to the distant country, literally in Greek, the big emptiness. Without God we are empty. We hunger and thirst for God's abiding Spirit, the ground of our being. Scripture abounds with images of this hunger and thirst for God. Jesus is there to offer relief from this yearning. He offered the woman at the well the Spirit, "Whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (Jn 4:14) In each of the feeding miracle stories large crowds gather and we are told that they are hungry. They always leave satisfied or fulfilled. The yearning and the hunger inside of them is healed, fulfilled, and made whole by Jesus.

Love, joy and peace come from God. God is the source. God wants all of us be filled with His love, His joy, and His peace. May God's Holy Spirit fill you this Christmas as never before and may the fruits of His Spirit remain with you forever.

Merry Christmas,



Personal Witness

One day in the seminary I was sitting in Fr. Robert Barron's' (Now Bishop Barron) theology class. We were having our usual lively discussion about some fine point of theology. Fr. Barron was looking a little concerned about the direction of our discussion and said, "Time out gentlemen (making the T with his hands), Jesus is not some divine contingency plan." He went on to explain that from the beginning of creation God knew that He was going to send His only Son into our world to reveal Himself to us, communicate His love to us, and to save us from our sins. God does not make mistakes. God did not get it wrong the first time and then send His Son to correct His mistake. From the beginning of time, just as a parent knows his/her child will make mistakes, God knew that because love must be free that we would abuse that freedom and fall. God chose from the beginning of time to give Himself to us in total self-giving love. Jesus is part of His plan of creation. This is who God is.

Our readings today reflect that plan of God from the beginning of time. At its deepest level our scripture is about eternity entering into time. The God of creation is with His people. Our God is not some deity who created everything from nothing and then stepped back to watch from some distant heaven. God is with His people, in covenant relationship with us. He is with us on the journey. He chooses to enter into time and space.

The messianic plan from all of creation is revealed to us in our readings. God chooses to enter our world in very specific times, and places and people. God enters a deep covenant relationship with David. God reveals His plan to send His Only Son into our world through the lineage of King David. God sends the angel Gabriel, to a virgin in the town of Nazareth in Galilee, a very specific person and place. At a very specific time the Holy Spirit will overshadow her, and she will give birth to the Godman, Emmanuel, God-with-us. Eternity steps into time.

In his first letter to the world, *Deus Caritas Est, God is Love*, Pope Benedict XVI pointed out that God is with us now in a new way: "The Eucharist draws us into Jesus' act of self-oblation. More than just statically receiving the incarnate *Logos*, we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving. The imagery of marriage between God and Israel is now realized in a way previously inconceivable: it had meant standing in God's presence, but now it becomes union with God through sharing in Jesus' self-gift, sharing in his body and blood."(P.13) In times past God was with His people in a variety of ways, in a covenantal relationship with them, on the journey with them, in the Ark of the Covenant, in the Rock of Horeb, speaking through the Law and the Prophets. Now God is Emmanuel. Now God is with us in that God is in us. At the Last Supper Jesus spoke of this indwelling abiding presence.

It was a spiritual awakening for me when I came to see the incarnation as more than a static historical event. I now see the incarnation as a living reality. Eternity desires to live and move in time in and through us. God wants to love in and through us, His beloved. We are called to be a part of the incarnation of God's love and life in our world.

Fr. Glenn