

Advent Reflection: God Became Human

As Catholics, we profess our belief in the Incarnation in the Nicene Creed: Jesus Christ “came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.”

The Incarnation is a unique and singular event. Its truth informs the way we view God and ourselves. For by his incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every person. He worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind, acted by human choice and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin. (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22)

God Became Human.

Advent offers only four weeks to reflect upon the meaning of those three words, how they changed the course of human history, and how they impacted upon the lives of those who believe in Jesus Christ. They can radically change the course of our personal history over these next weeks if we will welcome these words to fill the emptiness in our souls and allow them to create in us a deep sense of awe and reverence.

God came to be with us as a little child! Born like us into a world in need of love. Three words, “God became human,” deserve a space in our heart as a start to this Advent season. God wants to “hang out with us,” and Advent is a time of grace and blessing to integrate the meaning for us personally of “God became human.” Our spirituality consists essentially in the profound and intimate relationship with Christ. This season calls us to enhance this relationship as a preparation for celebrating Christmas.

Advent has four weeks. In the first week, we are encouraged to be on guard; stay awake to the miracle of the Incarnation

daily; for Advent is a season of special revelation. So this week look for and expect to see and experience traces of God's presence.

During the second week, we turn to the title of Jesus that most perfectly captures the idea of Incarnation: Immanuel, "God with us." Where do you look for God? We Catholics look for God's presence especially in the Eucharist.

In week three, we are invited to examine the testimony of John the Baptist, and do something in response to what we hear. That something is "repent and believe the Good News." Get personally involved with the Word made flesh, the Christ, the Son of the Living God. We can do this by taking inventory of our motivation, mode, goal and perspective in living out our daily lives.

And in week four, we are challenged to walk with Mary, and "Do not be afraid" for Jesus is near. Some Saints would say: "He is closer to us than the air we breathe!"

To fruitfully enter into this season, take inventory of your relationship with Christ that is rooted in the Eucharist, the Word and the people. These three means will strengthen the deep personal bond to Jesus Christ. Everything hinges on this bond. The heart of our religion is knowing Jesus intimately, loving Jesus intensely and following Jesus more closely.

Allow some questions to spark your reflection.

First, what is your motivation? Do you go to Mass out of obligation or awe? Do you see the Eucharist, Sacred Scripture, and your ministry as an opportunity for God to touch you and continue to form you into the image of his Son? Choose awe over obligation, pick up the New Testament before your smart phone, read it for 10 minutes each day for these 30 days of Advent, and see what happens.

Second, are you engaged in the Eucharist, Word and ministry as

an observer or a participant? Do you listen passively to the Scriptures at Mass or actively seek the connection with your own life? Do you participate in ministry and genuinely listen to the needs of others, or is your agenda uppermost in your mind when you are with another?

Advent is a new beginning, not only of a new Church year, but for you to engage in the Eucharist, Scriptures and ministry with a mind that explores to deepen your relationship with Christ and does not close down the transformational possibilities of these three avenues.

Christ always draws us into the future, into new life, deeper intimacy. Yet, we can choose to close down and resist the drawing power of God.

In Advent, ask for the courage to make some adjustments if your motive, mode and perspective are not where you want them to be and where you think God wants them to be. You might also look at those moments you find yourself defensive and ask yourself what is the value you are defending and 'do I need to continue to hold that position.' This is the season, now is the time!

Decide today to not allow Advent to get lost in our wild dash towards Christmas. Since Advent is the season of promises, filled with spiritual riches for those ready to accept its blessings, promise yourself a few minutes each day to dive deeply into the Sacred Scriptures or contemplation. For only if we dive deeply into Advent will Christmas deliver its deepest blessings! Make a decision now and give yourself the freedom to fail and start again; that will take the pressure off and you can enjoy this season.

As we approach the great Solemnity of Christmas we are invited to draw very close to Jesus, to contemplate Him in the manger. In your meditation, take Him out of the manger and hold Him in your arms. As St. Therese said, "*A God who became so small*

could only be mercy and love.”

Advent carries a quiet unmistakable message that God is near, our God is near, our God, who is unlimited and unconditionally loving, is near.

Let your heart be filled with love and affection for the Lord. He is not distant from us. He is Emmanuel, God with us. This Christmas, open your heart and let Him give you the greatest gift: a deeper love for Him and a deeper trust in His tender care for you.

Written by:

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Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament