

1
COME SPIRIT!!

4 Advent B-2003 THEME: Physical and Spiritual

Today's Gospel, the account of the Annunciation of the Birth of the Lord, is so familiar to us all that most of us can recite it word for word from memory. The scene has become so popular in the art world, that we assume that Mary was busy reading in a beautiful room when a magnificent angel appeared to her. It really hasn't occurred to us that she might not have had her own room, or that she might have been outside tending sheep or in a barn milking a cow. The angel may have had wings. Then again, he may not have had wings. Not all angels in scripture do, you know. The ones that appeared to Abraham walked over to him and walked away.

But, you would correctly say, none of that really matters, Father. What matters is that God's plan was being set into motion. His eternal Word was about to become one of us. The Kingdom of God was about to become a reality. People were about to be admitted into God's heavenly presence for eternity as his Son became one of us here on earth for a brief time.

And heaven and earth waited for a virgin, a mother in waiting, to agree to become part of God's plan. It is so much like the waiting of these last days before Christmas. The great day is almost here, but not yet. First we must wait a few more days, a few more hours, for the time to be right, for it to be Christmas.

The meeting of Mary and the Angel is an illustration of living faith. Faith is far more than reciting doctrines, or harboring a number of beliefs. Deep faith is the integration of

the spiritual and the physical. Real faith is seen in the union of the visible

COME SPIRIT!!

and invisible dimensions of a person. St. Augustine wrote that Mary, Full of Grace, conceived Jesus in her heart before she conceived him in her womb. She was so attuned to the spiritual, that the spiritual readily became physical within her. The medieval theologian Master Eckhart stated, "If Mary had not first given spiritual birth to God, he would never have been born bodily from her."

These are pretty heavy thoughts for the few days before Christmas when our minds are exploding with last minute things to do. We need the reminder that we are far more than the sum of our actions. We are far more than our physical attributes. We are also spiritual beings. Like Mary, we can make the spiritual physical. No, we can't give birth to the Savior, but we can make his presence a reality in the world.

How—by being people for God.

God calls us, like Mary, to particular missions in life. When we do our best to respond to his call we give evidence to his presence in the world. These missions might be to be a faithful and faith-filled husband or wife, father or mother, grandmother or grandfather. The mission may be to be a single man or woman with the time to extend God's love to others. The mission may be, right now, to be a holy widow or widower, offering the love cultivated during marriage to those around you. The mission may be to be a good little boy or girl, or a good teenager or young adult, learning how to love as God loves, sacrificially.

When we view someone as a Man of God, Woman of God, or Child of God, we see the total person body and soul. When others view us any of us as a Person of God, they see us

COME SPIRIT!!

as in our totality, physical and spiritual.

God calls us all to be generous in the missions he has given each of us, but he refuses to be outdone in his response to our generosity.

In the first reading for this Sunday we heard the first proclamation of the Messiah.

King David had radically changed the world of the Hebrews. His predecessor, Saul, had united the twelve tribes into a loose knit federation, David formed them into a strong country, a strong military might. His reign was one of victory after victory. The world now had a new military force.

One of the highlights of his reign was David's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. You might remember the scene of him bringing the Ark of the Covenant, the sign of God's special love for his people, into the city, dancing in front of it and upsetting his wife Michal. Once the wars were over, David worked on building Jerusalem into a proper capital. He built the equivalent of a castle, modern markets, a strong wall, a proper gate for the discussions of the wise people, etc. Then he felt a terrible remorse. He had won all his victories and built this beautiful city all because of God's love for Israel. Yet, he had not done anything to honor God.

4

David decided that it was time the Ark of the Covenant should be installed in a proper Temple, a beautiful Temple that would be the envy of all the other nations. The Ark of the Covenant was the portable structure that housed the Ten Commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai.

COME SPIRIT!!

David wanted to honor the ark and give respect to God. He wanted to build the Temple. David mentioned this idea to the prophet Nathan. Nathan, acting on his own, said something like, "Sounds like a great idea to me." But that night Nathan had a dream. God told Nathan to deliver the following message to David, "I do not need a Temple with walls and a roof. I can not be confined like other gods. However, because you want to do this out of love for me and the desire to foster this love and respect, instead of you building a house for me, I will build a house for you. Your house and your kingdom will stand forever. Your throne will be firm forever." This was the greatest gift that the ancient Israelite could imagine. David would live through his prodigy forever. There would be an eternal kingdom. Time would go on and the prophet Isaiah would refine this promise of an eternal kingdom to an eternal king who would be born of a virgin.

God calls us to do more than build a house for his presence. He calls us to be the House of His Presence. He calls us to radiate his reality to a world that looks for a Savior, that longs for a Savior.

O Come O Come, Emmanuel. Come and give us the strength and the courage to radiate your presence to a waiting world.