

Pastoral Reflection  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel...”

We have many songs for Advent, but this one is essentially Advent for me – the longing, the hope, the trust. But mostly the longing expressed so well in the chant. The music seeps into the very core of one’s person, to that place we often fill with extraneous busyness and stuff. In Advent, in the winter’s sparse environment, we can pause and touch that longing, deep within us, that only God can fill.

We can share in the longing of Israel as they yearned for the Messiah. We can share in the hope for the fullness of life that called to them. We can share in the song’s “Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel” sung by Christians since the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Christians, like us, hoping to fill the emptiness within them: Emmanuel.

Isaiah promises that when the Messiah comes the desert will bloom and flowers will be in abundance. People will be healed of their infirmities. Jesus uses this passage to respond to his cousin John the Baptist: “...the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.” This is the Messiah who has come among them. John had preached repentance and expected a strong ruler who would deliver the people from foreign rulers, the Romans. Jesus describes his mission, not as one of sovereignty and judgement as had been expected, but as blessing on those in need. John had his call to challenge people to repentance. Jesus’ call was to respond to those in need with compassion and fullness of life.

We celebrate a Messiah, Emmanuel, who calls us to mission, to be Christ in our time and place. A compelling aspect of that mission can be found in Amanda Gorman’s “An Ode We Owe.” She challenges us to care for our planet and all the people living on it. We can work together to conquer the future: “And say that today a new dawn we wrote. Say that as long as we have humanity, we will forever have hope.”

May this Advent be filled with hope for all humanity and for us as a community. “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.” May the longing that lodges deep within us spur us to deeper intimacy with Love, the Mystery of God among us now.

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