

Celebrating the Incarnation ~Midweek Reflection #29, Christmas, 2008

One way to anticipate, acknowledge and celebrate the Incarnation , The Word become flesh, Emmanuel, God with us, is to prayerfully read through some of the beautiful prayers that appear in our lectionary readings during the Advent season. These are prayers that have become staples in the daily office of the Church:

Mary's conceiving prayer in Luke 1:38: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; Let it be with me according to your word."

Zechariah's Benedictus, Luke 1:68-79: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through his prophets from of old, that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the most high; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Mary's Magnificat, Luke 1:46-55: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed; the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name. He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant Israel, for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever."

Simeon's Nunc Dimittis, Luke 2:29-32: "Lord, you now have set your servant free to go in peace as you have promised; For these eyes have seen the Savior, whom you have prepared for all the world to see; A light to enlighten the nations, and the glory of your people Israel."

The Angel's prayer, Luke 2:14: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom God's favor rests."

Eugene Peterson suggests this latter prayer is not so much one that we pray, but one we listen for throughout the busyness of the day, especially, in those quiet moments where we've left space for God. Who knows: if we're quiet enough maybe we will hear the angels singing God's glory even today!

May you have a very blessed Christmas celebrating the coming of the Christ Child, who, as God Incarnate, endured the Cross for our salvation.

Under God's mercy,

Howie