

Fourth Sunday of Advent (Year A) December 18, 2022

Today we celebrate the last Sunday of Advent, we light the candle of love and prepare for Christmas. Although the liturgical advent season is the four weeks prior to Christmas, it does not end with Christmas. Advent is a time of preparation, a time for Christ's coming but also a time for us to prepare for his second coming. Therefore, until that second coming is here, we should always be in a state of advent, a state of preparation, awareness, and repentance.

Speaking of repentance, I have a confession to make. Many years back, I was in a conversation with a friend regarding faith, he was not a believer and was explaining to me why he didn't believe. He stated that he felt the bible was very contradictory and for that reason he didn't believe. He went on to mention that one of those contradictions is how in the book of Isaiah it states that a Virgin will conceive a son and will name him Emmanuel, yet the son that was born, that we believe to be the savior was named Jesus, not Emmanuel. I was taken back by the statement because I personally didn't know why Jesus was not named Emmanuel, so I told him that I wasn't certain but that I would get back to him, the problem is that I never did.

Fast forward many years and we arrive at today's readings, as I was reading the question came back and I remembered that I never answered that question, so I figured that for my own sanity I should. One of the many challenges that we encounter with translations is that we can't just translate sentences word for word as they would not make any sense. When translating we need to keep in mind the words, sentence structure, culture, author's background, intent, just to name a few. For this reason, it is so difficult to translate and interpret the Bible. Think about our English translation, our Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament was likely translated from Greek, that is why we have so many different versions each attempting at getting as close as possible to the intended message.

This brings us to my friend's question between Emmanuel and Jesus; was there a bad translation for the name Emmanuel into Jesus? Did the prophets not relay the name correctly? Did the angel of the Lord get the names mixed up in Joseph's dream? Was it just a dream not truly intended to be the actual name? or perhaps Joseph misunderstood the dream and got the name wrong altogether?

Emmanuel and Jesus are both the name of our Messiah, of our Lord. Emmanuel was not meant to be our Lord's legal, written name, it represents what our Lord is... *God with us*. Jesus was meant to be our Lord's legal name, represent what he does and will do... *He saves*. The prophet Isaiah states ...**shall name him Emmanuel, other translations states ...shall call him Emmanuel, yet others ...shall call his name Emmanuel**. The same prophet later also states that the Lord shall be called ...**wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, prince of peace** yet we do not dispute the titles as names. In the second reading St. Paul, states that he was called to be an apostle... that we are called to belong to Jesus and called to be holy. When we call someone a Christian, when we call someone holy, when we call someone an apostle, we

are giving them a name although not a legal name, we are describing an attribute, mission, or purpose for that person.

Emmanuel is one of those names that represent the nature of our Lord, **he is God with us**. Our Lord loves us so much, that he humbled himself to share in our humanity. **He became one of us so that he could be with us**. Jesus was a man who walked the streets of Jerusalem over two thousand years ago, yet he is God with us today, **BUT HOW?**

From the beginning one of the biggest problems or challenges that our Lord wanted to solve was the problem of loneliness. He created Adam and Eve as a couple so that they were not alone; he states it is not good for men to be alone, sends out disciples in pairs, he forms communities, he wants to be our God and for us to be his people, because he doesn't want us to be alone. Think about how our Lord has become Emmanuel in your life.

- Maybe you have gone through a really challenging time or situation and you can look back and see that you were not alone.
- You might experience God with us, in your loved ones, your spouse, your children, your parents, your relatives.
- Maybe you experience God with us, in your friends, in relationships, in your neighbors, in your community.
- But maybe you don't, maybe you feel lonely, abandoned, misunderstood, ignored, surrounded by people but alone... HE WANTS TO BE YOUR EMMANUEL

Maybe You Will Find Emmanuel...

- In a kind smile, in a word of encouragement, in a timely hug, in a healing touch.
- In the love of a child, a parent, a friend.
- Maybe he is with you when you laugh and when we cry.
- When you talk to him and when you don't, when you seek him or when you don't.

God is with us, always, he is the great Emmanuel, but he is especially with us in the Eucharist.

Jesus was a man walking the streets of Jerusalem over two thousand years ago and physically he was only able to be with a few. But because of his resurrection he gave us the Eucharist. In the Eucharist he unites all his titles, his functions, his nature. In the Eucharist, **the wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, prince of peace, king of glory, son of the highest, son of God, savior,** found a way to be the great Emmanuel. In the Eucharist God found a way to be with us always, to be with us, physically and spiritually.

So, is our Lord Emmanuel OR Jesus? The Answer is YES...

When Jesus said, I will be with you always until the end of times, he was promising to be Emmanuel and his primordial method of accomplishing this is the Eucharist. This advent season might be coming to an end with the birth of Christ, but as we continue the advent towards the

second coming, REMEMBER God is always with us... the question becomes ARE YOU WITH HIM?