

Go Forth...

A SERVICE OF U.S. CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

STOP, LOOK AND LISTEN

SUNDAY READINGS:

Isaiah 7:10-14

Psalms 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

Romans 1:1-7

Matthew 1:18-24

MISSION COMMENTARY

I met a woman in one of our chapel communities, in a working-class *población* neighborhood on the fringes of the city of Santiago, Chile, who shared with me a beautiful and moving insight about her only child—a young man of 18 who had the mind of an infant, only able to utter noises, which sometimes interrupted the Sunday Mass.

“I realized,” she told me after Mass one day, “that God doesn’t pick just anyone to take care of children like my son. I stretched out my hands to the sky, when I realized what God had done for me, and cried out in a loud voice, ‘Thank you, Father! You have given me a son who will always need me!! I thank you for this privilege!’”

Surprises can be delightful and welcome, as on one’s birthday, or when an old friend drops in to visit. But life also gives us problems, unexpected developments that ruin our plans and challenge our expectations, as when the car fails to start, or a close relative falls seriously ill.

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When our plans go out the window, we make decisions that can be hasty, and based on expediency and appearances, rather than searching for what God may provide us to help us understand the event, or, at least, to put it into a new, refreshing perspective. A disappointment and the ending of a dream is transformed, then, into an opportunity to draw closer to God.



In today's Gospel reading, Joseph was enlightened in a dream before he had time to act hastily, trying to figure out how to make the best of an unexpected, difficult situation. He trusted in God's message, and brought his life into harmony with God's plan for the redemption of the human family.

May we ever pause, in what may confuse us and create anxiety or fear, to consider God's great love for us, manifested in the birth of Christ, and to see our life's experiences in the light of such love.

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NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS:

First Reading - Isaiah 7:10-14: Ahaz, the ruler of Judah, seems to have already made up his mind to follow the advice of his counselors, but the sign that Ahaz refuses to seek out from God will nevertheless take place—a young woman will give birth to a son—to confirm the truth of the message of the prophet.

Responsorial Psalm - 24:1-6: A hymn of praise to the Creator, sung for the entrance of worshippers into the Temple of Jerusalem, and recalling the divine conquest of the unruly forces of chaos, the “seas and rivers”, at the creation of the world.

Second Reading - Romans 1:1-7: Paul begins his letter to the Christian community in Rome, which he did not found, with a long introduction of himself, establishing common ground with his readers by appealing to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Gospel - Matthew 1:18-24: The central figure in Matthew’s account of Jesus’ birth is Joseph, unlike Luke’s account, which focuses on Mary. Joseph’s confusion, decency, trust and enlightenment makes him a major figure for the Advent season.

Notes and Commentary by by Fr. Bob Mosher,
a member of the Missionary Society of Saint Columban.

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