

Fourth Sunday of Advent 2019

GOD-IS-WITH-US

FROM THE READINGS

FIRST READING: The Lord himself will give you a sign.

Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.

Isaiah 7:14

SECOND READING: This news is about Jesus Christ our Lord ... through him we received grace.

Romans 1:3-5

GOSPEL: Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'.

Matthew 1:22-23

REFLECTIONS

It is time to look and see, with fresh eyes, that God-is-with-us!

There where you are you will find God.

Mary MacKillop 1874

Believe in the whispering of God in your own heart.

Mary MacKillop 1874

Nothing is so like God as stillness.

Meister Eckhart

God is in 'the bits and pieces' of each day, as the Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh puts it, even in the ones that seem furthest from heaven. To believe this is an immense challenge. Why would God want to be present in such 'ordinary' moments? But if we have the courage and patience to look, we may be surprised to find a God we could never hope for or imagine. According to Karl Rahner, each moment of our lives is like a grain of sand lying alongside the ocean of mystery. Every event, no matter how profane or mundane it might seem, is a potential experience of God. In fact, the experience of God does not normally take place in religious ways and at sacred times, but in the material of the failures, difficulties, responsibility, fidelity, forgiveness of the human condition.

Daniel O'Leary, Passion for the Possible

GOD WITH SKIN ON

The incarnation of God means that our deep need for being comforted can now only come in a human way. We can scarcely believe how intimately God is present to us – in every word, smile and tear. There is a story about the fearful child who, during the night, called out for his mother. She came into his room and spoke to him about the protection of the angels and of God all around him. He refused to be satisfied by her reassurances. ‘I want a God with skin on!’ he blurted out. And that is what God does in becoming human at Christmas.

Daniel O’Leary, Prism of Love



FOR THINKING AND TALKING

1. **From these readings and reflections**, what words, phrases and insights stand out for you?
2. **Imagine** waiting with Mary, the young woman of Nazareth. She is expecting her child, one whose name and entire life will be the story of God-with-us, 'God with skin on'!
3. **Remember** a time when the wonder and meaning of Christmas really touched your heart.
4. **Express** a hope or intention for the future.

CLOSING PRAYER

Blessed be the longing

that brought you here and that quickens your soul with wonder.

May you have the courage to befriend your eternal longing.

May you enjoy the critical and creative companionship of the question:

'Who am I?' and may it brighten your longing.

May a secret providence guide your thoughts and shelter your feelings.

May your mind inhabit your life with the same sureness with which your body inhabits the world.

May the sense of something absent enlarge your life.

May your soul be as free as the ever-newness of the sea.

May you succumb to the danger of growth.

May you live in the neighbourhood of wonder.

May you belong to love with the wildness of dance.

May you know you are ever embraced

in the kind circle of God. Amen. *John O'Donohue, Eternal Echoes*



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Acknowledgements: Daniel O'Leary, *Prism of Love*, Dublin: Columba Press, 2003, 79; Daniel O'Leary, *Passion for the Possible* pp 263,264,265; John O'Donohue, *Eternal Echoes, Celtic Reflections on Our Yearning to Belong*, London:Bantam Press, 1998, 2000. St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, in *St Mary MacKillop 1874, Daily Thoughts Perpetual Calendar*, updated 2012, www.sosj.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/12631.pdf; Meister Eckhart, Sourced Sept 2019 from: Living Well Centre for Christian *Spirituality*, www.melbourneanglican.org.au/NewsAndViews/TMA/Heroes%20of%20the%20Faith/Meister%20Eckhart%20-%20Heroes%20of%20the%20Faith%20-%20April%202011.pdf;