

ADVENT REFLECTION 2016

Week 4: Saying 'Yes' to God's plan

SCRIPTURE

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born.

His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

Her husband Joseph, being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and said 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the power of the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.'

Matthew 1:18-21

REFLECTION

Imagine the confused and conflicting emotions going through the minds of Mary and Joseph when her pregnancy was revealed. There may have been doubt, mistrust, recriminations, anger, tears. Yet Mary and Joseph handed over the whole situation to God, trusting fully that he alone could see the wider picture. Their story defies rational explanation; it can only be understood through faith.

- Do I have the courage and vision to see beyond what is tangible and believe that God can work miracles in my life?
- Do I believe that a new world is possible where everyone is treated fairly and there is enough for all?
- Am I ready to do whatever I can to help bring about this new world, the Kingdom of God, here and now?
- Can I resolve to deepen my commitment to Justice and Peace and pass the message on to others?

WHERE DO WE FIND THE BABY JESUS?

We must not seek the child Jesus in the pretty figures of our Christmas crib. We must seek him among the undernourished children who have gone to bed tonight without eating, among the poor who will sleep covered with newspapers in the doorway.

Archbishop Oscar Romero, Christmas 1979

ACTION IDEAS

- Set an extra place at the table to remind you of those who go without food and companionship
- Attend a local Carol Service
- Place a lighted Advent candle in your front window
- Welcome a stranger to your neighbourhood or help at a local refugee or asylum seekers centre
- Support the Jesuit Refugee Service www.jrsuk.net



REFLECTION AND PRAYER

For the past three weeks we have tried to make space for quiet reflection amidst the hurly burly of the Christmas season with all its pulls on our time and our purse-strings. In this final week of Advent we can remind ourselves of what Christmas really means for us as believers: the birth of the promised Saviour.

As we prepare to welcome the Christ child we are challenged to reflect on the truth Jesus brings and to consider our response, inspired by Mary's unconditional 'Yes' to God's plan. May we too say 'Yes' to his message and respond to his calling with joyful and willing hearts.

Lord, help me to show your love to those who are hard to care for; to those who reject your love; to those with whom I struggle to feel a sense of solidarity.

For the times I have only loved family and friends and taken no notice of others, I ask your forgiveness.

For the times I missed the opportunity to show your love through fear of looking foolish, I ask your forgiveness.

For the times I have lacked the confidence to approach a newcomer and have been wary of stepping out of my comfort zone, I ask your forgiveness.

Inspire me, Lord, to reach out to everyone in need. This Advent, may I be your eyes and ears, your mouth, your hands and feet, your heart.