

Daily Reflections

ADVENT

The Divine Intervention



December 18, 2016

Scripture

Matthew 1:18-24

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,

and they shall name him Emmanuel,
which means "God is with us."
When Joseph awoke,
he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him
and took his wife into his home.

Our Scripture Reflection

Well, there he was, finally able to get some sleep after learning that his betrothed was pregnant and it was definitely not his baby! He was so conflicted. On one hand, he wanted a son, a name sake, as much as any man would. But Mary was with child and it was not his. The Law said Mary could be stoned to death but Joseph loved her and could not bear the thought of such a horrible death for her. Perhaps he would just walk away, divorce her and be done with it all. But then the angel appeared and said, "Do not be afraid." What a message for Joseph and for us, especially at Christmas...."Do not be afraid". If only we could receive these gift-like words from God and not only at Christmas, but during all the times of trial and struggle throughout the year. What a gift, a comforting gift...."Do not be afraid", never, ever!

Food for your Journey

A woman and her son prepared to set off for the 11:00 p.m. Christmas Eve worship at their church. The husband, as usual, decided that he would stay home, sit in his easy chair and enjoy the evening unencumbered by "church stuff." As he watched his family leave in the car, he could see that it was starting to snow.

While reading the newspaper, the man thought he heard some knocking at the window, but then decided that he was hearing things. But then there was some more knocking, some pecking.

He opened the curtains, and he could see that the snow had intensified and that the wind had picked up. Then ... then he could see a bird, no, a whole flock of birds in his lawn. A few had flown into his window, perhaps to seek shelter from the storm. It was as if they were disoriented. He could see that they would be in trouble if they didn't find shelter, so he thought he would scare them away by flicking the porch light on and off. But they

wouldn't go. So the man went out on the porch and caused a tremendous racket, hoping that they would fly off to safety. But they still wouldn't go.

Then the man thought, "I have a barn that might offer them shelter from the storm." So he put on his jacket, went outside, pulled the barn doors wide open and put on a light, hoping to attract the birds inside to safety. But they wouldn't come. They huddled on the ground, sometimes flying into the window of his home.

"Food. Food will bring them into the barn," thought the man. So he went inside, took some bread, went again outside and tossed bread crumbs in a path that would lead them to the barn. Still, the birds would not come.

"Oh," said the man out loud, "I wish that I could become a bird, if only for a short while, so that I could show them how much I care for them and that I mean to offer them life."

Just then, in the distance, the church bells rang, announcing the birth of the Savior.

--Norman Wahl, Faith Lutheran Church, St. Charles, Minn., ecunet.org.

Prayer from the Heart

Dear Jesus, Help me to hear and trust during those troubling times in my life the words Joseph heard: "Do not be afraid." Thank You, Lord. Amen.