

Week 4: God with us

Opening prayer

God-with-us,
open our eyes to your presence in each one of us
and grant us the courage and faith
to take action for a better world. Amen.
(Light the fourth candle in your Advent wreath)

Scripture (Matthew 1:18-24)

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to send her away quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Emmanuel –
which means, God with us.

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife.

Reflection

Joseph can sometimes seem like a minor player in the Christmas story, but just like Mary, he has the courage to accept what the Lord is asking of him. His faith in God is strong enough to see past the external circumstances – a girl who is already pregnant – to the truth of the matter: this heralds the coming of Emmanuel, God-with-us.

God dwells deep within us. In Christ, God came to us as a vulnerable baby, born in a stable. He chose to live in our midst, to experience life on earth with us, in all its joys, hopes, griefs and anxieties.

God remains with us today, in each one of us, made in his image. In every person we encounter, we can see God and discover something new about God's love for us.

This is why we are called to care for one another, to love our neighbour, especially those who are poor. As Pope Leo XIV said in his message for the World Day of the Poor:

"The poor are not a distraction for the Church, but our beloved brothers and sisters, for by their lives, their words and their wisdom, they put us in contact with the truth of the gospel." (#5)

Can we, like Joseph, open our eyes to see God at work in our world? Can we say yes to participating in God's plan for the flourishing of all?

For discussion

- + Where do you see God at work in our world?
- + Who are those who deliver God's message to you? Are you willing, like Joseph, to listen and respond?
- + Jesus is born in a stable, in poverty. How does that impact our celebration of Christmas?

Closing prayer

Christ, our Redeemer,
we wait in hope for your coming.
May we be found ready at all times,
alert to the needs of others
and eager to answer your call.

Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Help us to see your light
reflected throughout creation, and
shining in all our brothers and sisters
wonderfully made in your image.

Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Fill us with the warmth of your love
and guide us in the way of peace

so that together we may strive
for a future free from war.

Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Lead us to work together
to share the warmth of your mercy
and build a better world
lit by your compassion for all.

Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Amen.