

HOMILY FOR 4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT

It is almost here. Christmas is upon us.

You can see the excitement on the faces of children whose eyes burn like lights on a Christmas tree. You can perceive it in the tender glances of two people in love hoping that Christmas might bring the promise of commitment and a life together. You can sense this in parents awaiting children returning from college or from their homes in other parts of the country. There doesn't seem to be an end to all the exciting distractions of the holiday season.

But I worry that in the midst of all these exciting things we overlook the real miracles present in the ordinary events of our lives. I wonder how often we take for granted the faithful love of a spouse or the loyalty of a trusted friend. I wonder if we fail to appreciate those who bring service to our lives throughout the year. I think of paper carriers and trash collectors, sales agents and hair stylists. I think of doctors and dentists and teachers and a whole army of people that touch our lives and that we often write off because "they are paid to do that." And even more, I wonder how often we take for granted the gift of life and the miracle of birth.

The readings this weekend invite us to take notice of the small and insignificant. They ask us to take note of the things we overlook. It begins with Bethlehem...a tiny city, far removed from the commerce of life. It was a trash-town to which few took notice. Too small to be considered worthwhile. But from this city, the Savior would be born.

St. Paul warns us to be wary of the spectacular because what counts is a humble spirit. He aptly points out that God isn't interested so much in the great sacrifices of the temple but rather in a spirit that is willing to follow the leading of God's spirit.

And finally, on this last Sunday before Christmas, we are given two women, two expectant mothers. One is young, the other is quite a bit older. Nothing out of the ordinary in this. But in the miracle of new life each will give birth to a son and their lives and our lives will never be the same.

Most of the world missed Christ's birth because it took place in what the world saw as an ordinary place and involved ordinary people...an expectant couple, some shabby shepherds and three neurotics who were wishing upon a star. But how wrong the world was. And how often do we miss the mystery and the wonder of the ordinary and every day events of our lives?

Christmas is but a few days away. Don't miss the mystery because of the glitter. Take the time to stop long enough to let it happen. Christ is coming. God is waiting to touch our hearts. Like Mary, let us be "blessed" to believe what God has promised us as we celebrate the dawn of Christmas, 2012.