



Two weeks ago I received a beautiful Christmas card. It was stunning in its simplicity and profound in its message.

The card portrayed a young couple...a couple that I married three years ago. They were standing together before a beautiful collection of pine trees. His left arm was wrapped around her with a beautiful smile on his face. She was standing looking at him wearing a long red knit dress that came down to cover the top of her boots. She was some 7 months pregnant. The husband's right hand was resting on the child she was carrying and her other hand rested on his. Written across the top in large print was the word "blessings" followed on the next line in small print "for a very happy holiday season."

I wished it had read "Christmas season." But in the end what was important was that this couple had captured the essence of everything we celebrate at this most holy Season...the gift of new life, the birth of a child, love made real, hope and faith wrapped in a glance to the future and the joy of the moment.

I couldn't help but approach this fourth Sunday of Advent without reflecting on this Christmas Card. For the card mirrored the readings we heard proclaimed today.

The first reading reminds us that in the Old Testament, the ark of the covenant was the resting place of the treasure of God's law and a symbol of God's presence among the people of Israel. The Gospel reminds us that the ark of the new covenant, of the new testament of God's love, is the great woman of faith who carries within her the child waiting to be born on Christmas. The readings of today, a Christmas card from a young couple in love, remind us that we should not get so involved in the tasks and details of Christmas that we overlook and take for granted what Christmas is really all about.

This is the message of this last Sunday of Advent...the profound truth that God's love for us is so powerful that the one whom the heavens could not contain took flesh in the womb of Mary. And just as Mary brought Christ into the world by her willingness to submit to the will of God, so we bring Christ into the world by our own willingness to trust in God's provident love within our own lives. On this weekend when we bless couples awaiting the birth of a child, we recall not only the joy of new life but also that every child waiting to be born is a reflection of the Son of God whose birth we celebrate in a few days on December 25th.