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Dear Parishioners;

“O come, O come, Emmanuel”. As we continue in our season of Advent, our season of Active Waiting, as we prepare the mangers of our hearts to receive, once again, the Christ child, I wanted to say a word about Jesus’ title of Emmanuel.

Emmanuel means; “God is with us.” We should ponder what it means that Jesus as God chose to be born of Mary and adopted by Joseph. Jesus could have just appeared in human form and avoided the experiences of the womb, the anxieties of teenage life and the grief of loves risked and lost. Instead, Jesus wanted to proclaim the truth as one who we can trust understands what it is like to be us. And we hear this assurance in the letter to the Hebrews;

“Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

They say that an effective leader is one who is willing to do whatever it is that he or she is asking of their team. For instance, if you want everyone to get a vaccine, then you’d better be seen getting one yourself. By taking on our humanity and living it the way that He did, Jesus is taking on both the role of our leader and our healer. By having walked among us and with us; on our good days Jesus is able to say to us; “Hey, pick up your crosses and follow me.” And on our bad days, Jesus is able to invite us to; “Come away and rest a while.” And the challenge for us is to be able to hear both of Jesus’ invitations because He is both leader and healer, He is our guiding star and He is our refuge.

Do you know why God created the earth to exist in a great and vast universe? He did it for two reasons. 1. It was so that we would look up into the vastness of space and be in awe of the one who created us.

And 2. God did this so that as you and I came to learn how valued we are by our creator, that we would be awed by the fact that as marvelous as the universe is, that all of the stars and the planets in the night sky cannot express the love and the gratitude of a single human heart, even one that can be as bruised and uncertain as ours. So that in the one place we would always know who God is, and, we would find our comfort in who we are in God's eyes.

Now, I want to say a word of thanks to Isabel Pires. Isabel bakes all year round and then sells her baking at the parish Christmas fair and donates her profits to the parish. And so you can imagine what the Pandemic did to her plans. But she kept baking not knowing if it would do any good because it was her way to serve God in the parish.

Since we couldn't have a Christmas fair, Isabel did the next best thing and she started selling her baking from her apartment and she has donated what she raised to the good of the parish. And I know that like a lot of generous people in this parish, rather than patting herself on the back, Isabel wishes that she could have done more.

Isabel is the example we all need right about now. We all need to just do our best and we need to trust our work to God's grace. So let's not be discouraged because this isn't going to be the Christmas that we want. Instead, let's keep preparing so that we have something that God is able to bless; 30, 60 and even 100 fold, for our sake and for those we hold dear in our hearts.

I can't remember if I have used this prayer before but it fits and it is fitting for our season of Advent. St. Thomas Moore (d.1535) once wrote; *"The things, good Lord, that I pray for, give me the grace to labour for. Amen."*

May God be gracious to us and bless us, now and forever.

Pat Monette/Pastor