

## **Sermon Advent III 12 14 19 (Saturday only)**

**So here we are, beginning the third week of Advent, the third week of expectant waiting. (Got any kids around that are getting a little squirrely?)**

**This week is traditionally associated with Mary. Often, Episcopal churches will use rose-colored vestments and altar dressings for this third week. *We* light the rose-colored candle in the Advent wreath. This Sunday is called Gaudete Sunday. Gaudete means rejoice.**

**During these three weeks I have had the opportunity to do a lot of thinking about our readings, about Advent, and about the very nature of Jesus.**

**Consider this, around the time of what we think of as Year One, the people of the world worshipped gods who were very different from our God. The gods of Rome and Greece, Egypt, and Babylon - Zeus, Apollo, Athena, Isis, Ishtar, Marduk, and Osiris were gods who were distant from the people, above them, beyond the them - removed. All they required from people was worship and sacrifice and blind adulation. No conversation. And most people worshipped *many* of them, to some degree. (Just to be safe.)**

**But then along came this God who didn't even have a name. He was just called... God. And he was different. He took walks with Abraham. They talked about things. He was a god, but he said he**

**was the ONLY god. Early on, he demanded sacrifices, but he spent time with people. He considered the death of his son to be the ultimate sacrifice, so after that he didn't demand any more.**

**Now most of the male gods apparently had, shall we say, assignations, relations with human women. In fact, for a while there, it seemed as if every family of importance had a god somewhere in their lineage (and maybe that was the point).**

**But our God, did things a little differently. He picked a NOBODY, a young, probably 12-13 year old girl (which was the usual age of betrothal), and she was impregnated, by the Holy Spirit. I have to confess, I'm not sure how that works, but there we are. The main thing, however, is that everyone involved, other than God and the Holy Spirit, was a nobody.**

**This was a big change. We received a god, Jesus, who came in part from humanity, an ordinary being who was the product of the Holy Spirit and a human mother, who was actually born into poverty. He appeared to be nobody special, with a mother and adoptive father who were ordinary people. Mary is the one who we make the most of, but don't give Joseph short shrift.**

**Joseph was an extraordinary man. When Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant, he had the right to walk away from her, but he didn't. He had the right to leave her to the usual punishment**

**for adultery - stoning - but he didn't. Joseph was a man of extraordinary faith. He believed in his dreams. An angel told him to trust Mary, and so he did. He trusted in what the angel told him and he went with it. Later, the angel visited him again and told him that in order to escape from Herod, he would have to take his little family off to Egypt! Can you imagine that? For Joseph, who never travelled any further than Jerusalem in his life, that was probably like telling him he had to run off to the moon! But he did it. And then, once Herod died and the danger to Jesus was past, an angel appeared to Joseph again in a dream and told him that he could bring his family home. And he did it. Joseph, who rarely ventured no further than 10 miles from his home in his entire life, took his wife and infant son off to Egypt, almost 500 miles - by donkey and on foot - and brought them home again when the coast was clear. We don't know much about Joseph, but he was a hero - an ordinary guy in extraordinary circumstances - who rose to the occasion - who trusted and acted out of love. We tend to forget what a stunning example of simple trust, devotion and love he was.**

**These were not kings or queens or classic heroes. These were ordinary, everyday people who did what God asked them to do.**

**This was the first time in all of history that we had a god arise out of this, out of ordinary people and circumstances.**

**And that, to me is the true miracle of Christmas. Jesus came to live *among us as one of us*, as an ordinary human being. That is what set him apart. That is what made him so unusual. He came to all of us, each of us, as one of us.**