

(SING)

**Oh, come, Oh, come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.**

I grew up in a house full of songs. Every one of us, my sisters, my mother and my father, especially my father would burst spontaneously into song. If we were happy, we sang, sad, we sang. It was just normal to me. It was like living in High School Musical.

My relatives sang. The ones on my dad's side did, anyway. They sang a lot! Silent Night at Christmas and Danny Boy at funerals.

I assumed my friends sang. In fact, I assumed everyone just burst into song when the mood struck, but that I just hadn't witnessed it yet.

(Pause)

I believe Jesus sang. And Joseph. And I assume Mary sang. I think she would have sung:

Oh, come, Oh, come, Emmanuel.

I believe it was the song of her heart. I think she may have been singing it when the angel appeared to her in today's Gospel. Well, maybe not the exact words, but something in the same spirit.

(PAUSE)

I'm sure we have all given some thought to what it must have been like for Mary at the Annunciation. Perhaps we have put ourselves in her place and wondered if we could have said yes.

But, have you ever thought what Mary's life was like, before the Annunciation? Today's Gospel holds a few clues. She was certainly young, somewhere between twelve and fourteen. We can assume this because it was common for girls of her culture to be betrothed around that age.

She was betrothed to Joseph.

Betrothal was different then and there. It was not engagement the way we see it, it was the first stage of marriage. It was legally binding. Mary would still be living at home. There would be a time when Joseph would take her into his home, but not yet. A Jewish marriage could not be consummated until that time. Her betrothal confirms her virginity.

We also know Mary lived in very troubling times. Roman occupation of her people was difficult at best. The Romans were heavy handed in their domination, and Herod, the Jewish King was pitiless in his greed, ruthless and bloodthirsty in protecting his power.

(SING)

**Oh, come, oh, come, our Lord of might,
Who to your tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times gave holy law,
In cloud and majesty and awe.**

I would imagine that she was not immune from seeing or at least being greatly aware of the suffering of her people. Talk at the table with family, talk at the town's well where women met, talk at the gates where men gathered would be punctuated with "When Messiah comes."

When Messiah comes, Roman occupation will be gone. When Messiah comes, we will be free to live and worship as God's People, without fear.

When Messiah comes.....

It was a phrase of great hope and anticipation. And in times of Jewish persecution, even to this day, it is their greatest solace.

(SHORT PAUSE)

Mary would have been hopeful of the coming of Messiah.

(SHORT PAUSE)

**Oh, come, Thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heavenly home:
Make safe the way that leads on high
And close the path to misery.**

(PAUSE)

In our first reading today, we hear of God's promise to David. God promised to establish the House of David, the Family dynasty of David.....forever.

Mary, along with all her people knew Messiah would come from the line of David. Joseph was in the line of David. And since Jews of her time would rarely, if ever, marry outside of their tribe, Mary herself was most likely a descendant of David! The hope of Messiah was somehow made more real, more immediate to her because of that. Messiah will come to save my people, and will honor my family by coming from our clan.

Our first reading also shows us that our God is a God of promise. Mary would have been intrinsically aware of God's promises, and would know, as we should know, that God keeps His promises.

(LONGER PAUSE)

In our Gospel we cannot overlook the fact that Mary said “yes”!

I want to say that in no way do I want to diminish the uniqueness, the holiness and the profound greatness of Mary's fiat, her “yes” to the will of God.

But I propose that Mary was also

- historically,
- anthropologically and
- culturally

looking and waiting for and desiring Messiah, and that her longing for Messiah **already was**...as... much... a... part of her person as was her state of perfect grace.

Mary's "yes", and being FULL OF GRACE..... in the light of her hope for Messiah was the perfect act of free will.

Her cooperation, born of the freedom of God, united with her own volition, gave human life to the Son of God, the instrument of peace and salvation for the universe.

(PAUSE)

We cooperate, *as Mary did*, in the on-going Salvation and Sanctification of the World. God still wants **our YES!** The promise to David is the promise realized by we who are the New Jerusalem, His Church. The promise is fulfilled..... and is even greater than that promise to David!

We have the promise of Eternal Life in His Presence!

**Oh, come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save
And give them victory o'er the grave.**

The gift of Advent is the opportunity to conform our hearts and minds to the will of God. We see the model of how to do that in Mary. We are tempted to think less of our roles and abilities, especially in the light of Mary, who was conceived, and remains without sin. But it was her human will, her desire, formed by her **conscience** that gave that act of free will. Grace perfected it.

**Oh, come, Thou Day-spring from on high,
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadows put to flight.**

(SHORT PAUSE)

At our Baptism, we were freed from the stain of sin and we were filled with grace. Through the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist we are able to renew that state of Grace by the Gift of God. In that presence of grace, **our** “Yeses” to God's will for us, when made out of our **desire** to do God's will and not our own, may also be perfected.

What amazing dignity.....what incredible worth our humanity has in Christ!

(PAUSE)

The Great Feast of Christmas is less than a week away. And I know that there is real and legitimate concern over the shopping and cleaning and decorating and cooking and baking and all....of...that..that....is...a....part.... of.. us... that wishes to celebrate Christmas in our traditions, and **celebrate it well!**

And this **is** good!

Yet as Christmas draws near, we are running out of Advent.

Are we prepared? Are we ready, like Mary, to welcome Messiah?

How can we know?

Let me ask you.....what is the song in your heart?

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**