

December 20, 2020

Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Sm 7:1-5, 8B-12, 14A, 16

Rom 16:25-27

Lk 1:26-38

GROW: During Advent, we await the One who is perfect grace, light, and joy. The Christ Child's arrival during a time when darkness has been increasing each day, and our anticipation of that arrival, emphasize his salvific role. For if even the smallest light is a glimmer of hope in the night, how much more is Christ's perfect and all-consuming light a life-saving flare in the darkness of sin and death. As we hear the angel Gabriel say of Christ, in his visitation to Mary: "He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High ... and of his kingdom there will be no end." Emmanuel, God with us, is the reason for our hope, and the reason for our joy.

GO: I don't know about you, but despite my best intentions, I have been known to get a little swallowed up in the commercialism of Christmas. But this last week of Advent feels like a chance to reorder my mind and heart. One way to do this is by focusing on the "O Antiphons," prayed during the Church's evening prayer from December 17-23. Each antiphon begins with the word "O," and is followed by a title for the Messiah, found in Scripture, and a petition for him to come and save his people. Although this may sound overly complicated, you most likely know of these without realizing it: they have been transposed into the verses of the hymn, *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*. Today's first reading speaks of David, who thought he could build a place for God to dwell, but he can't. Instead, for *us*, whom God created and fashioned in his own image, God created a dwelling for his Son, so that he might enter into our human history as one of us; and in doing so, dwell among us and within us forever. Come, Lord Jesus.

INVITE: When lighting the final candle on your Advent wreath, invite your family to help you make the prayer interactive. Focus on the lesser-known verses of *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*, such as the one below – it is an ancient prayer still very relevant today.

O King of the Nations

O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of humankind;
O bid our sad divisions cease,
And be for us our King of Peace.

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.*