



Advent 4 – Birthing the Divine Within Us and
The Surrogacy of the Sacred

Scriptural References:

Isaiah 7:10-16

Psalms 80: 1-7 and 16-18

Romans 1: 1-7

Matthew 1: 18-25

Our Advent Answer

Welcome Blessed Ones to our 4th and final
Sunday of our Advent Journey. Our Spiritual
gestational journey of Birthing the Divine within

us... and our Surrogacy of the Sacred. During this Advent we have joined symbolically and spiritually with Mary as she has provided that most beautiful and nurturing of spaces for the Christ Child, our Jesus to grow within her. As Mary has felt the Sacred One grow, move and yearn for birth within her, we too have felt the kicks and turns of our own Sacred Seed as it too yearns for birth.

On this 4th and final Sunday of Advent I want to just take a moment and speak about all of the amazing symbols of the Season that our Liturgical Environment Team has gifted us with.

First and foremost, we are awash in this most beautiful of blues...the color of the Advent Season symbolizing Mary, the Blessed Mother

of Jesus and also in First Nations symbolism the “Up Direction” represented by the color blue... Sky Blue... from where the sacred ones came.

Next, the many and varied creches that surround us. The word creche has several interesting meanings... it is a French word which we adopted. One meaning is the traditional Nativity Scene... stable, manger, animals, and characters. Yet other meanings are: a day nursery; a hospital for abandoned children; and a gathering place for the care and protection of young animals. And you have probably noted that all of the mangers are empty... we are waiting for the sacred birth... the Birthing of the Divine... physically and spiritually with Mary and symbolically and spiritually with us.

Also in the rear of the Sanctuary is the First Nation's Cradle Board... also ready, empty and waiting for the Sacred One.

Another strong symbol for us is the Advent Wreath. The first meaning is that the wreath is circular. Like our First Nations' Medicine Wheel and the Circle of Life, representing the repetition and circularity of the Seasons. The candles on the Advent Wreath symbolize the Light of Christ, each week getting brighter and brighter as our understanding of the Divine growing within us gets clearer and clearer, until finally on Christmas the White Candle in the center of the Advent Wreath is lit... The Christ Candle. The Sacred Child has been born among us.

And finally, images of Mary and Joseph abound in our Sacred Space during Advent as we revere both Mary the Birther and Joseph the Protector. Strong symbols all. Symbols of preparation, waiting, ripening and emerging light.

Last Sunday, on Advent 3, we learned a valuable life lesson from the most unlikely of sources, if you remember... it was The Hallmark Christmas Channel. We heard a modern Christmas parable with the poignant and true Elder's Lesson... "Just do the next Right Thing".... and we learned how to birth the Divine within us... decision by decision; choice by choice... by creating Sacred Space wherever we go, by "Being a Blessing" to all we encounter. Second by second; minute by minute; hour by hour, day by day... just "Do the Next Right Thing."

And now here on the 4th Sunday of Advent we have one of the most amazing scriptural examples of “Just Doing the Next Right Thing” in today’s Gospel of Matthew.

Today, Blessed Ones, we hear the classic Christmastime stories of Mary learning of her pregnancy and Joseph’s response... not only accepting this remarkable miracle birth, but embracing and empowering it.

Now let’s put the story in a first century Jewish context. (READ GOSPEL AGAIN HERE)...

In our 21st Century culture today, un-wed maternity is quite common. Cultural biases against un-wed birth have all but disappeared in our

modern society. But in the world of the 1st Century Jew... un-wed pregnancy was a death sentence for both the mother and the unborn child. Public stoning at the city gate was the punishment.

Now in our Gospel today we heard that “Joseph being a righteous man” and not wanting to submit Mary and her Child to this horrible end, decided to “put her away privately.” However, even this decision was a sentence of a lifetime of hiding, deceit, derision and scorn for both Mother and Child. Decision... Decision... Just do the next right thing? But what is the next right thing?

Joseph thought that he had found it... “putting Mary and Child away privately,” in his mind a reasonable, compassionate cultural compromise. But Spirit had other ideas.

Today, we learned of Joseph's Dream, filled with Angels delivering a new and different solution... The Next Right Thing not only for Joseph, for Mary and her unborn, but for all the next generation upon generation, those of us who would hear, learn and live the Jesus Way. The Right Thing here for Joseph was to accept the craziness and unreality of this most bizarre of situations, humbly and faithfully. Not knowing the whole story, or even most of it... but knowing and believing in the next few "right" steps, that would keep Joseph's and our Spirit Journeys moving forward. Angels and Answers coming in a dream... many of our modern day pragmatists still scoff... "seriously, are you kidding me?" But for those who truly walk the Spirit Journey even today, angel messengers and answer-filled dreams are not the

stuff of fairy tales and legends but are the stuff of a higher and more connected spiritual reality.

And so we know how this Hallmark Christmas Channel story ends... The First Christmas Story... Mary said "Yes"... Joseph said "Yes", ...The Stablemaster said "Yes"... Angels, Shepherds and Sheep... Yes, Yes and Yes. And for us... those who are Walking the Jesus Way 20 centuries later... as we struggle to Birth the Sacred Within Us... there remains only one, true "Next Right Thing" for us to do... simply Join the chorus of Dreamers who just said "Yes!"

As we Birth the Divine... as we discern the "Next Right Thing" for us to do...

Say yes to The emerging light of the Advent Wreath, illuminating our spirit path.

Say yes to Mary's strength

Say yes to Joseph's faith

Say yes to Dream Answers and Talking Angels

Say yes to mangers and cradleboards filling in the
most glorious of ways.

Say yes to the unlikely and the impossible

Say yes to the Small Child who will lead us

This Christmas... Just do the next right thing....

Just say Yes!