

December 24, 2025 Christmas Eve Readings at Grace
Titus 2:11-14
Luke Selections 1:26-2:20

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts
be acceptable in your sight, O God who is Emmanuel

Let us imagine the scene, perhaps a little differently from the scene in Jesus of Nazareth with Olivia Hussey as Mary.

Let's imagine a warm spring day, perhaps one of the first after a snowy cold winter. The sun is shining, the snow is melting, the dogs and cats are playing in the yard. Morning prayers have just been said to give thanks for the day and ask for courage for what lays ahead as well as petitions for loved ones, and to just magnify the one who gave us this beautiful day.

And because it is such a nice day it has been decided to hang the laundry out to dry on the line, so that it will get that nice clean fresh air smell. There is a slight breeze from the south to warm the air and the birds are all in a twitter as they also enjoy this time. A voice is heard, from where it is hard to tell, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you!" Do not be afraid ... Do not be afraid ... Do not be afraid ... for you have found favor with God.

Although we can imagine this scene putting Mary into the narrative from 2000 years ago, not just the moment of conception, but the birth and the placing of Emmanuel into the arms of this vulnerable family, shunned, almost stoned, and chased into a foreign country, we can also remember how the coming of Emmanuel unfolded in our own lives. We all have our own story of Emmanuel coming into our lives, maybe not while hanging laundry out to dry or maybe.

How was Christ born into your heart? When did you first take Jesus into your heart and your life? When did Jesus first become real for you? Was there a whisper asking that the door of your heart be open?

Mary, easily, or maybe not so easily, we actually don't know all that is happening in her life that might have prevented her from saying yes, what we know is she said, "Yes, here I am, the servant of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word." She grew up in a Hebrew family and knew the familiar words of her people, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and your mind, and your soul." She knew that in many ways her life was not her own, that she belonged to God.

And when the angel called out to her, that this is the time, this is what it means to give your life to God, that this is what it means to love the Lord your God with all your heart, she was ready. She did not delay, she did not say, oh wait, let me finish this first. Oh wait, let me just do this or that, let me check with my espoused or my mother, or anyone. She just said, "yes, let it be with me according to your word."

She didn't know the hardship of what it would mean to say yes, the sword that would pierce her own heart. She just knew God was calling her and she said yes. And after that everything she did was with Emmanuel in her life. Every conversation, every decision, every move, Emmanuel, God with us, present.

When Jesus is born into our lives, we are not the same. As Jesus explains to Nicodemus, we must be born from above, born of water and spirit. Nicodemus, not quite sure what this means, asks, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" Jesus explains, "What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit."

When Jesus is born into our lives, we become a new creation, no longer living for the world, or for ourselves even, but for God. We are transformed, and of course this transformation is ongoing, continuing in our lives. Emmanuel, God with us, continually works within us, converting us from who we were, even who we were yesterday, to who are and who we will be, a constant metamorphosis, always becoming.

This year, as we bring this good news into our hearts, let us imagine how we, like Mary, are called to birth Christ into the world. Amen.

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