

Rev. Derek Fairman

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent A

This Sunday we are aware that Christmas is near and that there are many last-minute things to accomplish before it comes. Though we do not like all of the anxiety that accompanies the last-minute rush, nevertheless there is something exciting when we look forward to something, and we think about something that at first was distant and yet before we know what happens is almost there. That excitement is part of the spirituality of Christmas too.

We pause to think about those who were most involved in the coming about of the first Christmas. We pause to think about what our Lord Jesus Christ meant not only to us but to the world. We also pause to think about what it must have been like for our Blessed Mother. This fourth Sunday of Advent calls to mind the anticipation and the expectation that she experienced the days before the birth of her Son. We as the Church wait for the coming of the Messiah along with the Virgin Mother.

That anticipation is found in the first reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah. The prophet Isaiah foretold the miraculous <sup>conception</sup> ~~birth~~ of the Messiah. He said to King Ahaz, "The Lord Himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel." The prophecy of Isaiah not only spoke about the future Messiah but about His Mother as well. The fulfillment of this prophecy occurred in its fullest sense in our Blessed Mother. Our Blessed Mother's virginity existed before, during and after the birth of Christ. This is important for us to believe.

When the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world, He came into this world without a human father. He already had a Father, the First Person of the Trinity. His virginal conception is ultimately a sign, a miraculous work that points to His identity as the Son of God. That is the faith of the Church: the Lord Jesus Christ is Son of God and Son of Mary.

Sometimes we hear about the "Christmas Miracle." However, what does that mean? Usually in our culture it refers not to the Lord's birth, but His conception. Certainly the Lord Jesus' conception by the power of the Holy Spirit was miraculous. His birth, however, is a <sup>distinct</sup> ~~separate~~ matter. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, but He was not born by the power of the Holy Spirit. So did anything miraculous happen at the Lord's birth? Yes, what was miraculous about the Lord's birth was that Mary remained virgin before, during and afterwards. That is an actual miracle, even though that is not what some are referring to.

