

AN ADVENT REFLECTION: GOD'S AFFIRMATION
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Advent always affirms us of two things, not just one.

One: the affirmation that because Jesus has come, we have hope. The king is among us, his kingdom has been proclaimed. But we also know that his kingdom is not yet fully established, his rule of right relationships does not characterize either our lives- I can only speak for myself- or our communities, or our churches; so we wait in patience for the return of the king.

Meantime, between Christ's first coming and his coming again are years of mission. It is the *kairos*, the time of grace for us to respond to Jesus, God's Word Incarnate.

When I came to Tucson in July the summer heat seared the desert outside and inside of me. The trustful welcome of the brothers and the freshness of God's call in the Yaqui and Tohono O'odham families and villages gave refreshing distractions and shade like the palo verde in the desert.

I carried a handful of gifts to share; at the same time I also knew I bore some flaws and wounds. But I was determined to be light and salt in the name of the Crucified among the Yaquis and the Tohono O'odhams. Hoping to build with them the kingdom of God.

In no time I found my balance of hope: that Jesus must first settle in me, no matter how painfully it would take. Then grow in me to build me up for right relationships -with God, myself, others and creation.

Thus, God's mysterious plan of salvation became flesh in Mary's womb and words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to your word."

Two: the affirmation that to be born/re-born, our lives, our communities, churches and missions juggle between incarnation and glorification- all the time.

*"Though he was in the form of God
Jesus did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at.
Rather he emptied himself and took the form of a slave,
Being in the likeness of men.*

*He was known to be of human estate, and it was thus he humbled himself,
Accepting even death, death on a cross!*

Because of this, God highly exalted him." (Phil 2: 6-8)

Advent is the season reminding us that God chooses to pitch his tent in the midst of the barbarity and sordidness of life: prejudices and mistrust; the diabetes and cancer that plague the Reservation areas; the alcoholism and disunity in the villages; the shocking poverty lurking at

the outskirts of Tucson...It is in there too that God takes flesh in the desert. And amid the aridity and threats glorifies himself as Emmanuel, *God-is-with-us*.

In the end, Advent's double affirmations get resolved in one simple affirmation that can stand on its own: in the one coming, Jesus, Savior, Redeemer. With his nail-pierced hands and feet, his slashed side, and broken heart. He stands for us: his judgment gives way to mercy, mercy to hope and hope to service – the birthing of his kingdom among us.

Reflection Questions:

1. What would it take for me to seriously take Father Judge's admonition: "Here then, my dear children, is that divine work, to "put on" the Lord Jesus, which means that you study yourself and know yourself, that self may perish and that Jesus may live" ?
2. What would make our particular mission a kingdom of right relationships as Jesus lived/died for?
3. Advent is a season of hope and what do I hope for?