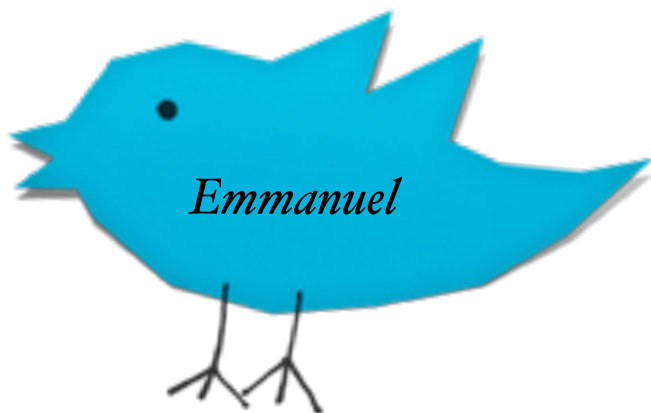




advent



lectionary
reading

Cycle A

4th Sunday of Advent

Lectionary # 10

Reading I: Isaiah 7:10-14

The prophet Isaiah responds to the Nation of Israel as they ask for a sign. It seems to be human nature to want signs, indicators, and certainty as we move through life. However, a faith life has no certainty except that God will be with us. In fact, when Israel asked for a sign the Lord provides the prophetic announcement that *the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall be named Emmanuel*. The very word Emmanuel is Hebrew for "God in the midst of us."

Reading 2: Romans 1 : 1 - 7

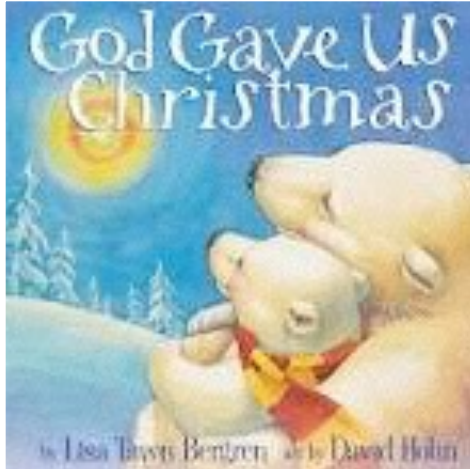
Saint Paul, throughout his missionary journeys and letters, makes God's presence known to the Gentiles. If it were not for God's action through the apostle Paul, Christianity could well have remained another sect of Judaism. Saint Paul sees his mission, as given to him by Jesus Christ, to be the vehicle by which God's presence among us is made to the world. In this reading from Romans, we see Saint Paul's reoccurring theme of making God's presence known in the midst of a people, Emmanuel.

Gospel: Matthew 1: 18 - 24

Here we have the preamble to the story of the birth of Jesus. In this story we hear that it was by the *power of the Holy Spirit* that Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary. We also are allowed entry into the mind of a perplexed Joseph, who being the just man he was, would not expose Mary to ridicule of being pregnant out of wedlock. In a dream all is made clear to Joseph and he follows God's instruction and takes Mary into his home. Again the name **Emmanuel** surfaces and we see again that God indeed wishes to be in our midst, to be with us.



children's
story



God Gave Us Christmas

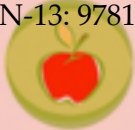
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character
education
activity

**Emmanuel is a Hebrew word
and it translates
"God with us"**

God Gave Us Christmas

As Little Cub and her family prepare to celebrate the most special day of the year, the curious young polar bear begins to wonder who invented Christmas? Mama's answer only leads to more questions like is God more important than Santa? So she and Little Cub head off on a polar expedition to find God and to see how He gave them Christmas. All along the way, they find signs that **God is all around them.** Through Mama's gentle guidance, Little Cub learns about the first Christmas and discovers that Jesus is the best present of all. The story provides the necessary elements to express how God is **Emmanuel, God with us.**

Where are all the places that you can see and feel the presence of God in your life? Where have you experienced God? In whom have you experienced God? Draw a picture of all the things, places and persons in which you have seen and felt God's presence.

The people of Israel are waiting for a sign from God that God truly loves them. The prophet Isaiah proclaims to them that God's love will come into their world. In the Christian tradition we believe that this occurred in what is known as the Incarnation, that is Jesus taking on the form of a human being and living among us, hence we call Jesus, **Emmanuel**, "God in the midst of us." Just as Saint Paul made God known through his preaching, we too are called to make God's presence known in the world by living our faith in a manner that expresses God's love and concern for all in the world. We accomplish this by doing good deeds and speaking good words to those around us. The Gospel prepares us for the fact that Jesus came into the world by the power of the Holy Spirit and the openness of Mary to being God's mother. Here we see that Jesus is true God and true man.

Activity

Step One: Using various art materials, such as colorful construction paper and markers, have the students make their "Family Tree" in such a way that God is directly connected to each person on the "Family Tree."

Step Two: Have the students share their "Family Tree" with one another and how they connected each person on the "Family Tree" with God. The emphasis again should be on **Emmanuel, God with us.**

God is always present to us in many different ways: nature, events and most especially people, since people are made in the image and likeness of God--but we have to be looking!!!



case study

**Look.
Feel.
Know.
Act.**

What could you do today?

If your parish or school has a “Giving Tree” take one of the gift tags and purchase the gift indicated on the tag. As you wrap the gift, offer a prayer for the person who will receive the gift. In particular, pray that the person will recognize God’s presence and love for them when they receive the gift.

Look Feel Know Act

Feeling lonely is one thing, but feeling all alone is something totally different. Take some time and look around at all of creation and see that God is present to you in everything that is in nature. Recognizing that God has provided all these things and knowing that we are in relationship with them, start to think of the things of creation as Saint Francis of Assisi did in his Canticle of the Sun. He refers to the Sun as his brother and moon as his sister, recognizing how each of them contribute to the beauty of the world. Make a commitment to taking action that will help you see and recognize all the elements of the environment as your brothers or sisters. For example, if you see trash littering where you are standing pick it up and dispose of it in a proper place. Then, of course, go and wash your hands with water! You can Google the Canticle of the Sun to see all the other elements that are brother and sister to you.

In *God Gave Us Christmas* we see Little Cub, with the assistance of Mama, observing the wonder of God that surrounds her on her journey as she looks for God. The truth comes out clearly that it is in the journey that we arrive at great truths and one of the greatest truths is that Jesus is **Emmanuel**, “God with us.”



**closing
tool**

Pray that you will always seek to see God all around you, especially in people, since we are made closest to God’s image and likeness than any other of God’s creations. Amen.



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