

Readings

Mi 5:1-4a
Ps 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19
Heb 10:5-10
Lk 1:39-45

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A few weeks ago, we heard the imagery of the end of times – strong words evoking powerful images: tribulation, darkened skies, thunder, lightning, powers will be shaken, fighting to keep me from being handed over. These are cinder blocks constructing a defensive wall.

That is not the case in what we just heard. In today's scriptures there are a plethora of little words: small, birth, peace, body, (God's) will, once-for-all, haste, leapt, voice. Each word is a tile in the mosaic of Advent offering an image of hope.

In today's readings as in our daily lives, the presence of God is recognized in the little things. Does not each of us know how a small gesture of greeting can transform a stranger into an acquaintance? Not a word from Mary is recorded in today's Gospel but her gesture of familial love speaks volumes. Is there anything that has more power to bring a smile to our face than the actions of the tiniest of God's creation, a baby? The infant leapt for joy at the nearness of the Savior. The smallest segment of time is an instant; are we not aware how our lives can be changed for good or for evil in such a small moment? The Visitation was a moment that forever has shaped our lives of faith.

A word is such a small thing and yet it can bring such happiness when used as it was intended when we were made in the image and likeness of God. God's word created us. We too are called to imitate our Creator as best we can. A word can be the greatest gift we give this season and create great joy. "I love you." "I'm sorry." "I'll pray for you."

The preparation that we must personally undertake for the coming of Jesus in our lives is no grandiose and ponderous adventure. It does not require of us some great sacrifice of money or of labor. It is really as prosaic as saying a simple word – “Yes” – to the invitation that each of has received to accept God’s offer of mercy.

We have probably all been busy with the hustle and bustle of the Christmas shopping season and have placed Advent as an afterthought on our to-do list for the holidays. It is not too late. We know that Christmas is only hours away but there is still time to prepare. It takes just a moment, an instant of sincerity and peace. It takes just a word to do what we should have been doing since the start of Advent (if not the start of our lives of faith).

St. Augustine said that to be faithful in little things is a big thing. This approach is at the heart of Christianity. God wants our “yes” to his invitation; it is a moment whose impact is for eternal life. Let us learn from Augustine who lamented: too late have I loved you, Beauty so ancient and so new. Too late have I loved you.

Even though there is *little* time left, we can say “yes” to the voice announcing God’s will for us. It will bring us *peace, once-for-all*. We can say it in a moment, in an instant. We can give *birth* to Jesus by saying a simple prayer that brings our Advent to a meaningful end: Lord, have mercy on me a sinner. It is not too late to love – make *haste*!