



# School Sisters of Notre Dame

## ADVENT WEEK 4

DECEMBER 24, 2017

### **INTRODUCTORY PRAYER—A call to intimacy with God**

Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) PROSLOGION  
(adapted for inclusive language)

“Come now, insignificant [one], leave behind for a time your preoccupations; seclude yourself for a while from your disquieting thoughts. Turn aside now from heavy cares and disregard your wearisome tasks. Attend for a while to God and rest for a time in [God].

“Enter the inner chamber of your mind; shut out all else except God and whatever is of aid to you in seeking [God]; after closing the chamber door, think upon your God. Speak now, my whole heart; speak now to God: I seek Your countenance; Your countenance, O Lord, do I seek. So come now, Lord my God, teach my heart where and how to seek You, where and how to find You.

“If You are not here, Lord where shall I seek You in Your absence? But if You are everywhere, why do I not behold You in Your presence? Surely You dwell in light inaccessible. Yet, where is this inaccessible light? Or how shall I approach unto a light inaccessible? Or who will lead me to and into this light so that in it I may behold You?”

### **REFLECTION**

“I have been with you wherever you went . . .” and “Behold, you will conceive in your womb.” This week’s reflection will unpack these two passages, one from 2 Samuel and the second, from Luke, to remind us that it took a quantum leap for God to become human, to walk among us, to want to be with us. Our reflection will use several homespun stories, a few lines of poetry from James Weldon Johnson and concepts from science.

One story involves Mother Georgianne Segner, a revered Superior General from the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Besides her personal charisma, her intelligence demonstrated as a former college math professor, she had been the Postulant Director for many years. She was often quoted for saying, “Postulants, the door swings both ways.” She had earned her respect, if not a

reverence akin to adulation, by upholding high expectations of her charges with forgiving, piercing eyes.

One young Sister was honored to be asked to be her driver. The trip took them through Dallas, and Mother Georgianne asked the travelers to stop by her former home to visit her aging mother. After the visitors were seated, Mrs. Segner gave her daughter a fixed stare and said in a stern voice almost scolding tone, “Well Anne, for goodness sakes, get these girls something to drink.” The young SSND driver and her companion were somewhat taken aback to hear the Mother General of their order rebuffed on their behalf for forgetting the customs of southern hospitality and no less so when their Mother General served them sweet tea. The disparity between a Mother General and a young Sister under final vows pales to the disparity between the Divine and the human. Christ came in humility, expecting to serve.

In a similar vein, the chief executive from a large company joined the family gathering of several generations. He was slightly late from a day at the office and the cousins and siblings were already seated in a circle. The youngest was crawling around on the floor in the middle of the circle gathered. When the family patriarch entered, he went down to the floor on all fours in his pricey suit and began crawling around after the little one making playful sounds before scooping the child into his arms hoisting it high overhead, and talking nonsense. To connect with his grandchild, he set aside the dignity of his office decorum.

A final story comes from an elementary school Catechism lesson following a playground dispute. The teacher was explaining to two children at odds with one another that the next morning when their estranged classmate came back from communion they should greet the Christ within their classmate. Host as Christ in the sacrament, becomes part of our flesh, or is released as a tri-part molecule to become our energy. To take literally the words of James Weldon Johnson, we find:

*This great God,*

*like a mammy bending over her baby,*

*Toiling over a lump of clay*

*Till he shaped it in his own image.*

Our Creator God gives Mary upon her fiat, the role of changing a lump of clay, her own flesh, into part of the Triune Godhead. This is the mystery of Incarnation that we celebrate at Christmas. This is the God who will say to the shepherd David soon to be king, “I was with you wherever you went.” This is Emanuel, God with us.

**Fourth Sunday of Advent, Lectionary: 11**  
**READING 1 [2 SM 7:1-5, 8B-12, 14A, 16](http://www.usccb.org/bible/2samuel/7:1)**  
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When King David was settled in his palace,  
and the LORD had given him rest from his enemies on every side,  
he said to Nathan the prophet,  
"Here I am living in a house of cedar,  
while the ark of God dwells in a tent!"  
Nathan answered the king,  
"Go, do whatever you have in mind,  
for the LORD is with you."  
But that night the LORD spoke to Nathan and said:  
"Go, tell my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD:  
Should you build me a house to dwell in?'

"It was I who took you from the pasture  
and from the care of the flock  
to be commander of my people Israel.  
I have been with you wherever you went,  
and I have destroyed all your enemies before you.  
And I will make you famous like the great ones of the earth.  
I will fix a place for my people Israel;  
I will plant them so that they may dwell in their place  
without further disturbance.  
Neither shall the wicked continue to afflict them as they did of old,  
since the time I first appointed judges over my people Israel.  
I will give you rest from all your enemies.  
The LORD also reveals to you  
that he will establish a house for you.  
And when your time comes and you rest with your ancestors,  
I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins,  
and I will make his kingdom firm.  
I will be a father to him,  
and he shall be a son to me.  
Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me;  
your throne shall stand firm forever."

**GOSPEL LK 1:26-38**  
**(<http://www.usccb.org/bible/luke/1:26>)**

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The angel Gabriel was sent from God  
to a town of Galilee called Nazareth,  
to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph,  
of the house of David,  
and the virgin's name was Mary.

And coming to her, he said,  
"Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you."  
But she was greatly troubled at what was said  
and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

Then the angel said to her,  
"Do not be afraid, Mary,  
for you have found favor with God.

"Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,  
and you shall name him Jesus.

He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High,  
and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father,  
and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever,  
and of his kingdom there will be no end."

But Mary said to the angel,

"How can this be,  
since I have no relations with a man?"

And the angel said to her in reply,  
"The Holy Spirit will come upon you,  
and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

Therefore the child to be born  
will be called holy, the Son of God.

And behold, Elizabeth, your relative,  
has also conceived a son in her old age,  
and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren;  
for nothing will be impossible for God."

Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.

May it be done to me according to your word."

Then the angel departed from her.

**Song Suggestion:** *The Promise*, by Michael Card:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyX-uriW3qk>

RESPONSORIAL PSALM [PS 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29](#)

<http://www.usccb.org/bible/psalms/89:2>

READING 2 [ROM 16:25-27](#)

<http://www.usccb.org/bible/romans/16:25>

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