

Second Sunday of Advent – Dec. 8/9, 2018 – Reflection: “The Bethlehem Candle – Lit in Love”

“And so Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to David’s town of Bethlehem - because he was of the house and lineage of David - to register with Mary, his espoused wife, who was with child. While they were there the days of her confinement were completed. She gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the place where travelers lodged.”

The Gospel of Luke, Chapter Two

The Christmas song proclaims, “It’s the most wonderful time of the year!” ... and, in many ways, it really is. It’s a time of the year when people open the doors of their homes to family and friends, guests of all kinds. It’s a time of the year when, walk through the kitchen door and breathe in the aromas of sweet desserts baking, succulent meats roasting, mulled cider bubbling, and special foods cooking that are only served in this season. It’s a time of the year when people open their hearts to give: give the perfect gift to that someone special; give a needed gift to the stranger without.

But, all of this company, all of this cooking, all of this shopping and wrapping and sending ... all of this “most wonderful time of the year” ... make it seem like “it’s the most stressful time of the year!!” Why do we put ourselves through it all? Isn’t it because we’re reminded , especially

at this time of the year, to make room for love ... the people we love ... the traditions we love ... the poor we're supposed to love ... the Reason for the Season, the Christ Child we profess to love?

But, at this time of the year - like so many times of the year - we can get so caught up in the details ... so crazy from all the hustle and bustle ... so put out by difficult relatives ... so turned off by greedy hands with the constant gimme, gimme, gimme ... so embittered by remembering old slights and wounds, that we wanna slam the doors of our houses and our hearts shut and hang out a sign, "DO NOT DISTURB" as we hibernate till the first warm breezes of Spring.

I don't think it was necessarily pure evil that closed the inn and the hearts of the people of Bethlehem to the Savior two thousand years ago any more than I think it is evil in us that keeps us from finding room for God in our lives. It's just that we fill up our attics and closets, our heads and our hearts, our calendars and dance cards, so full that there's no space for anything else ... no space for any One else. We put up clear signs that we are too busy or preoccupied for God or others.

A chain of American Inns uses as its slogan, "We'll Leave the Light On For Ya." This light, this candle, reminds us that the Reason for the Season wants to come and stay with us. Sometimes He'll be a cute little baby or a beloved relative. Sometimes He'll be an imposition: a noisy homeless man; a Mom looking for gifts for her kids again this year; a bell-ringer from the Salvation Army; a hypercritical in-law; a distant teen; an over-tired cashier who's heard nothing but complaints.

Help me Jesus find space for You in my datebook; time for You in my calendar, room for You in my things; an Inn for You in my heart.

"I'll leave the light on for Ya"!!!