Earlier this week, I was chatting on-line with my high school friend Keith and his wife Bonnie. They are expecting their first child with the baby’s due date coming up, in about a week. Both of them are extremely excited about being parents for the very first time, but on the other hand, they have been highly stressed out, nervous, and anxious. After all of these weeks, the waiting is almost over. Their lives are about to take a dramatic turn with the expected new arrival into the family.

Both Keith and Bonnie have gone through a lot over the years. They had gotten married, lost two of their parents, changed jobs, underwent major surgeries, bought a home, and moving…etc. and now a baby. With less than a week to go, they seem to have everything all ready to go. The crib, the clothes, the bottles, the diapers, the baby’s room is all painted and furnished. Just about anything you can think of, is ready to go. The only thing they can do right now is just WAIT. The baby is not his way. It’s “**almost here but not yet**”. A lot still needs to happen.

In the same way, we are also in a similar position as we enter into this 3rd week of the Advent season. Everything seems to be ready, the decorations are up, the trees are set, the cards have been written and sent, the stores keep reminding us how many shopping days are left until Santa arrives. But we must ask ourselves….what are we preparing for anyway? Santa’s arrival or Christ’s? Why do we still have to wait? Let’s bring it on Christmas! The last couple of weeks of Advent truly test our patience, endurance, and our spiritual discipline and understanding of what this season is all about. We must take a stand and hold firm on our ground.

Just as the baby needs to stay in the mother’s womb until the time is just right, the coming of our Messiah also has His proper due date and time. No one knows exactly when that day may be, only God knows. We cannot rush it or can we delay the coming of the Messiah child. Meantime, we must patiently wait until the timing is perfect!

The season of Advent invites us to “SLOW THINGS DOWN” in the midst of our busy lives. When we slow down, we pay more attention to the details and can see the fuller masterpiece of how everything fit in together into God’s story of love and salvation for humanity. We come to realize the ultimate purpose of God’s plan and appreciate God’s unconditional love for humanity.

Just like the story that we read earlier about the young virgin Mary who was nervous and anxious about what was about to happen to her physically, emotionally, and spiritually. This was a nerve-wrecking time for her, if you could imagine. But why Mary? God chose Mary to execute God’s grand plan of salvation for humanity because Mary said YES to God. God has chosen the right person for the right reason and in the right timing of all.

 The passage that we read earlier was famously known as the ***Magnificat*** which means “**magnified**” in Latin. This was one of the earliest ancient Christian hymns sung by the church, even today among the Roman Catholic communities.

Considering the context and the circumstances of the situation, this Canticle of Mary could very well be a song of fear and anguish, but give this expecting teenage mother-to-be credits for her courage and faith in overcoming all of these into a song of praise, exultation, and worship. Mary was NOT your typical teenager. She sung about how it was indeed an honor for her to be chosen by God to be the bearer of God’s Son who would be the savior of the world.

 ***“My soul magnifies the Lord! And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant, for the Mighty one has done great things for me, and holy is his name.”*[[1]](#footnote-1)** What a “magnificent” song of praise and a great expression of JOY!

Through the noble giving of herself in fulfilling God’s purpose and plan for humanity, Mary attested to the rest of humanity that God **chooses ordinary people to accomplish extra-ordinary tasks! Even when we say NO to God at times, God still say YES to us!**

As the angel declared, ***"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High. 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 holy; he will be called Son of God.”***

 Over the years, many biblical scholars have analyzed this event from a sociological standpoint. Many consider this event as a major social breakthrough with this unwedded teenage mother-to-be and her child. This child was no ordinary child either, He was sent on a Divine mission to restore the social order, to deconstruct the system of injustice, human abuses of privileges and unconfessed sins of this world. It was because of our human sinfulness that this Christ child was sent to us to be our Savior and our Redeemer. The world needs a redeemer and the timing is just right.

 Through God’s providence, the seeds of faith and courage have been planted in the womb of this unwedded teenager in order for the Messiah was to be born. Imagine what was going through Mary’s emotion with all the anxieties, worries, fears of rejection by her fiancée and potentially being ostracized by the rest of her community, how would you react to all of these if you were Mary? Even in the midst of these unusual circumstances and challenges in life, God still chose Mary to be the one, in order to fulfill God’s plan. If God chose Mary, imagine what God can and will do when God chooses us today.

**God’s purpose often leads to the reversal of human values, exalting the poor and dethroning the mighty.** It may seem radical through our human lens, but just remember, God does not see what we humanly see. God invites us to see things beyond the superficial and out of the ordinary. God invites us to think critically, use our imagination and creativity for the sake of God’s glory and bring honor to God’s name.

 Through Mary’s extraordinary faith and courage, we have been inspired to confront our personal fears, struggles, and doubts with greater confidence and boldness. In this Advent song of praise, Mary has challenged us to magnify God’s reconciling grace and missional work, so others may also experience the fullness of God’s Love, Joy, and Peace, and Hope as well.

 Furthermore, we are reminded that **God invites those who rest marginally, on the fringe of society just like Mary, to be at the center of God’s salvific plan for humanity.** Through the incarnation of the Word, a new kingdom will soon arrive and a new reversal of order will be inaugurated with the coming Messiah.

 As we read in our Matthew passage earlier, while he was being imprisoned at the time, John the Baptist sent his disciples to Jesus to inquire whether Jesus was the One who is sent by God to be savior of this world. “*Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?”* John knew that the time was near for him to step aside. The waiting would soon be over. There would be a transition of prophetic voice from John to Jesus, but the transition also comes along with a series of visible signs that may seem radical and not make much sense at all, just as the one who prepared the way for the Messiah must now learn to follow him. The first will be last, and the last will be first.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The long-awaited Messiah would come in a time when things may seem radically reversed…totally flipped upside down. *The blinds shall receive their sight, the lames shall walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor shall have the good news brought to them.*

 Behold, God is on a mission to do a new thing through those who are oppressed, humbled and lowly. Things may not look or feel as they may use to be but God is offering us something extraordinary that we may anchor our faith onto, especially in times of uncertainties and challenges. God promises that He would remain steadfast and faithful to those who confess and turn their trust in Him, as we patiently wait for the Lord’s coming.

 This is the heart of the message of Advent, that **we shall wait expectedly, joyfully, and even fearfully like Mary for the Messiah child to be born.** We shall rejoice and anchor our hope in the coming Christ, even when things may seem totally out-of-whack. We shall re-center God where God belongs, not on the margins, but at the center of our hearts, as we wait and fix our eyes on the coming days of the Messiah.

As Christians, we are all living in an “*Almost But Not Yet*” world, for Christ has come and will soon to be coming once again. Our everyday living dwells upon this promise of hope that one day Christ will restore God’s Kingdom once again. As the Apostle Paul reminded us that the ***waiting of our Savior and our endurance produce character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us****.[[3]](#footnote-3)*

Just lie my friend Keith and Bonnie, the baby is on His way. He will come one way or another. It’s just a matter of time. The question isn’t when the baby will arrive, but “are we ready?” Are we ready when the baby does come? Are we willing and ready to welcome Him with our open arms to embrace Him? With open hearts to love Him? And with open ears to listen to what He has to say to us all?

*For unto us a child will be born, to us a son will be given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called* ***Wonderful Counselor****,* ***Mighty God****,* ***Everlasting Father****,* ***Prince of Peace****[[4]](#footnote-4)* who was, is and is to come. But until then, we must wait a little longer. **We are almost there, but not yet!**

In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Luke 1:46-49* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Burgess, John P. *Feasting on the Word, Year A, Volume 1,* P.70 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Romans 5:4-5* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Isaiah 9:6 (KJV)* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)