**Homily** **for the 4th Sunday of Advent**

*Rev. Francis D. Kim*

   When I was in Jerusalem, one evening, I looked out my hotel window and saw the lights of Bethlehem in the distance. I thought about the response of the innkeeper when Mary and Joseph wanted to find a room where the Child could be born.

   The innkeeper was not hostile or opposed to having them, but his inn was crowded, his hands were full, and his mind was preoccupied.

   Perhaps, he told them, “I wish I could help you, but I must keep my priorities. After all, this is a business, and this coming Child is not real concern of mine. But, I’m not a hard-hearted man. Over there is the stable. You are welcome to use it if you care to. That is the best I can do. Now, I must get back to my work. My guests need me.”

   And, this is the same answer that millions give today. It is the answer of preoccupation, not fierce opposition, not furious hatred, but a lack of charity and lack of concern about spiritual things. Some of us are simply too preoccupied with other things to welcome Christ into our lives. Don’t let that happen to you!

   In a few days, the birthday of Jesus Christ will be celebrated all over the world. It will be celebrated in various ways, in many languages, by people of all races. For a few hours many in the world will stop talking of conflicts and wars. People will exchange gifts and talk about the peace and happiness.

   We all dream about something special gifts we hope to find on Christmas morning. What is the best present to you for Christmas? Of course. Jesus Christ Himself who is our Savior is the best gift to us. He brought the eternal peace on earth.

   Jesus came into the world to save all kinds of people: rich and poor, black and white, educated and illiterate, and everyone in between. Since the first Christmas, God has been telling us that Jesus is the Savior for everyone. No matter who you are, you need Christ. And, no matter what you have done, He loves you and stands ready to welcome you.

   When the Lord comes to us, He Himself will fill us with great joy and peace. This eternal peace can never be taken away. Christmas season will be passed by quickly. And, the decorations come down, and the parties come to finish. But, our peace and joy in the Lord never come to an end. Because God will be with us always!

   Jesus promised His disciples, “No one will take your joy from you.” The Lord gives us a supernatural joy which enables us to bear any sorrow or pain and which neither life nor death can take away.

   So, through the readings today, the last Sunday of Advent before Christmas, we share in this sense of expectation and anticipation of the coming of our Savior. The light of Christ penetrates the darkness in our lives, bringing us strength and hope.

   In the Gospel, there are two women who are really expecting God’s promise: Mary and her cousin Elizabeth. They meet at the small town in the hill country. When Elizabeth greeted Mary and recognized the Messiah in her womb, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and with a joyful anticipation of the fulfillment of God’s promise to give a Savior.

   Imagine their greetings, sweet tears of joy running down their cheeks. They praise and thank God for the great love. They were very humble, quiet, and gentle ladies, and they share each other their joy and happiness of God’s presence in their lives.

   Elizabeth has waited many long years for her promised child. Mary, young and newly pregnant has also waited for her fulfillment of God’s promise. They have had a great hope for salvation. They have seen how God pierces through the darkness of their trial and difficulties, bringing them the light of healing and love.

   Now, from this small town, from the hearts of humble two women, the fulfillment of human salvation is spread out to the whole world. And, this great light of joy shines upon you and me.

   When the Christ Child will be born in our heats, we will know that God is indeed faithful to His promise. It is His great love to enter the human history. Now, the time is at hand. Jesus is about to be born! Let us open our hearts. Then, the Savior is coming, and He will be with us always!

   Whatever life may bring, we can place our trust in Emmanuel, knowing God is with us in our coming and going.

   May the joy of the Lord come forth from each and everyone of you during this holy Season!