

Allow God to reign this season

The season of Advent, somewhat similar to Lent, call us to repentance – in Greek, metanoia. The literal translation of the Greek is “to change how we think.” How might we think differently this Advent?

A plaque that a much admired counselor friend of mine has hanging in her office inspired some ideas in me. It reads, “Father, translate all that is false in me into truth; hatred and resentment and anger into love and forgiveness; fear into courage, grief into joy, apathy into zeal, tension and stress into faith in you.”

In the Scriptures it is John the Baptist who shouts this call to repentance. But it seems to me that Mary is the one who best exemplifies it. Mary allowed God to “overshadow” her, to take over her life and be born in her and through her. Is that not our call during Advent and during life? And as Mary literally allowed God to take flesh in her, is that not our call as well?

So I would alter the prayer somewhat. Jesus didn’t just speak to us of a Father “out there.” In John’s Gospel Jesus tells us that the “Father and I will come and make our home in you.” So I would suggest that we pray the prayer, line by line, from the presence of Christ within us. It’s an important change. As long as we pray to God “out there,” the power is always outside of us. When we pray from the power of Christ within us, the power is inside of us! So let us pray:

“By the power of Christ within me, I release all that is false in me and allow it to be turned into truth.” If Christ is within us, truth is within us. All we have to do let go of falsehood.

“By the power of Christ within me, I release hatred, resentment and anger, and allow love and forgiveness to expand in my mind, my body, and my spirit.” It’s so easy to allow our negative feelings to expand. How much more peaceful it is to allow love and forgiveness to expand and fill us.

“By the power of Christ within me, I release fear and allow courage to fill my mind and heart and spirit.”

“By the power of Christ within me, I release grief and allow joy to expand within me.”

“By the power of Christ within me, I release apathy, and allow zeal to fill me.”

“By the power of Christ within me, I release tension and stress, and allow faith in you to fill me.”

Mary literally surrendered to God and allowed God to have God’s way with her. We who are also Christ-bearers want to do the same. The challenge is that we resist letting go and letting God. In some strange way, we seem to be attached to our negative energies more than we are attached to God.

We sometimes forget that love and joy and peace are natural to us. That’s the way it was in the Garden of Eden. However, once we left the garden, anger and fear and tension came in.

Christmas brings us back to who we are. God came to restore God’s life within us. As one spiritual commentator put it, “All religions can help us to find our way to God. What is unique about Christianity is that we believe God is looking for us.”

As Christians we believe we have accepted this Christ into our hearts. The question for this season, and for all seasons, is, Will we allow God to reign in our hearts and in our lives?