

Four Candles: An Afternoon with Sam Kauffman



"Could you please be our candle lighter?" the lady with pale blonde hair before the altar asked.

At first, I thought she was talking about the sixth grade boy before me, but then it was clear that she was looking right at me.

The lady, who had just introduced herself to the middle school students and teachers of St. Joan of Arc School, was Sam Kauffman who was visiting us from all the way across the country in the San Francisco Bay area. She was invited to speak to our church and our school to celebrate the first Sunday of Advent with her presentation "Four Candles." Ms. Kauffman is an internationally known Christian singer and songwriter. Some of her music is even used in prison ministry.

Ms. Kauffman's presentation was brilliant and beautifully structured so that even my most precocious sixth grade boys were captivated. Her voice was crystal clear as she started us off with a traditional form of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."

She told us the story of a broken organ in an Austrian at Christmas and how the music minister managed to compose "Silent Night" on the guitar, scrambling to transform the melody into an instrument that wasn't his first choice. It was a story I had never heard, and one which spoke of the idea that hope helps us to see possibility.

As the presentation unfolded, we (I) continued to light the candles as we listened to stories of the prophets (did you know that Jesus fulfilled 44 prophecies made about Him?) and the great preparations the world made and is still making for Jesus. Ms. Kauffman told a new Nativity story about the "Little Star" who didn't have great gifts to offer the baby Jesus, but ultimately gave us his light.

Her parting words have stuck with me most. She asked us whether we are a WAM or a WAY. WAM means "what about me?" and WAY means "what about you?" It got me

thinking about my own plans for the holidays and how I need to be less selfish and more Christ-centered.

We were so honored to host Ms. Kauffman and blessed to have her share her gifts with us. I particularly liked her modern, upbeat version of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel." Her presentation was an excellent way to kick off the Advent season, in our church, our school, our homes, and our hearts.

Please check out Sam Kauffman's website. She offers many more interesting presentations and music to enrich your spirit.