



"Honey, we're pregnant!" Very few statements can carry as much emotion as those few short words. Yet those are the words that are near the beginning of both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. Abraham and Sarah find out in old age that they will have the promised child while Joseph and Mary discover that they will have the child promised to the descendants of Abraham.

Pregnancy is a time of waiting, a time of reflecting and a time of examining values. And that is the purpose of Advent: to be a time of waiting. Waiting is not a strong trademark of many people in our hurry up world. Waiting is not easy because it challenges our desire to be in control. And that runs the danger of shutting God out of our self-controlled world.

The meaning of Advent is not to rush into Christmas but rather to get into touch with that inner part of ourselves that is marked by longing, hoping and trusting. It is not a time to rush ahead to the moment of birth as much as it is entering into the waiting moments of this amazing gift of love that is pregnant with personal meaning.

During the past several months we have been challenged by numerous controversies and structure changes. Like Advent, it has been a time of waiting, a time of reflecting and a time of examining values. Advent comes at the end of the year, inviting us to examine the past twelve months and make plans for the year ahead. As the German mystic and Dominican spiritual teacher Meister Eckhart once said: "What good is it that Christ was born 2000 years ago if he is not born now in your heart?" Are the days of Advent and Christmas enough time to ponder that awesome question?

The last few days of Advent are a time to look inside and pray over how the closing words of today's Gospel that were spoken to the pregnant Mary are also spoken to us: "Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."