

## Idiot Joy, Irresponsible Action for the Sake of a New World

Advent 3B - December 11, 2011

This morning we are going to talk about the joy, faith and courage of a pregnant young woman.....What if MEN got PREGNANT!

1. Maternity leave would last for two years....with full pay.
2. Natural childbirth would become obsolete.
3. All methods of birth control would be 100% effective.
4. Men would be eager to talk about commitment.
5. Children would be kept in the hospital until potty trained.

In the fall of 2005, four members of the Christian Peacemakers Team were abducted in Iraq by a group known as the Swords of Righteousness. The Peacemakers are a missionary group in Iraq working to proclaim the Gospel of repentance, peace and reconciliation. They believe that faithfulness to what Jesus taught and modeled calls Christians to more active peacemaking. They believe that a renewed commitment to the Gospel of Peace calls Christians to new forms of public witness which may include nonviolent direct action. Men and women who volunteer as members of Christian Peacemakers Teams make a commitment to reject violence, even if violence is done to them. They covenant to stand firm against evil, and they swear not to dehumanize their persecutors. The Swords of Righteousness killed one the four peacemakers before the other three were released in March 2006.

Some are opposed to this vision of non-violent peacemaking. On his November 29, 2005 radio broadcast, Rush Limbaugh said that he is supportive of the kidnapping of the 4 members of Christian Peacemakers. ***"Here's why I like it; any time a bunch of people that walk around with their head in the sand practicing a bunch of irresponsible, idiotic theory confront reality, I'm kind of happy about it, because I'm eager for people to see reality, change their minds if necessary, and have things sized up."*** Rush Limbaugh might have been right about one thing. He called prophetic Christianity (Christianity which seeks a new world through nonviolence, peacemaking and compassionate action) an irresponsible, idiotic theory. According to the standards of the world, Christianity is irresponsible and idiotic. And it is our most idiotic values & ideas that, in the end, bring us all back to a place where hope is real, peace is possible, and joy is in the air.

***"My soul magnifies the Lord,"*** Mary sings. Here is a girl who is unmarried and impoverished, and who has recently been visited by an angel with a very peculiar message. ***"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."*** Mary had every reason to run screaming from this angel, every cause to consider him an Angel of Darkness. For having a child out of wedlock, she could be stoned for adultery. At the very least, she could be rejected by Joseph, her parents, her village. She could spend the rest of her days in even deeper poverty, struggling to

keep herself and her child fed outside the safety of a marriage and community. But she doesn't reject God's ridiculous plan to inhabit her womb. She hurries to see her cousin Elizabeth and breaks into song: ***"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior...."*** This great hymn of praise has empowered the oppressed and unnerved oppressors for millennia. Mary sings of a God who reaches down and touches the pain of his people. This God lifts up the victims of economic poverty and political violence and draws them into his gentle arms. And this God sends the proud packing. The powerful and corrupt who are fluent in the ways of violence and domination are deposed. The rich, who have hoarded the stuff of Creation for their own purposes, are sent away with nothing to show for their greed.

In these Advent weeks, we prepare to hear the wild, glorious, ridiculous story of God showing up in our community, in our hearts and in all of humanity once again: the story of the Sacred, the Holy One making himself at home in swaddling clothes in the home of the poor and the forgotten. Mary tells us what the incarnation means: things are going to change. Oppression will give way to justice. Tears will flow into rivers of laughter. The high and mighty will be humbled, and the poor will be filled with hope and joy. At the time that Mary sings her revolutionary anthem, nothing has yet changed on the surface. All that had changed was her ability to see, her capacity to more completely trust in the God she loved.. She claimed that God has brought down the powerful from their thrones—but the Roman Empire continued to dominate the Israelites in their own land. She professed that God had filled the hungry with good things—but famine still plagued the peoples of the earth.

How can Mary's very soul be bursting with such joy when there is so much reason to tremble with fear and quake with sorrow? It's irresponsible. It's idiotic. Because joy is not the fruit of circumstance; it is born in a relationship. Joy does not come because everything in our world is going the way we want it to go; joy comes because we have fallen completely in love. We do not feel joy because we have gotten a raise at work, or we have a new car, or it's a great powder day. We feel joy, our lives are joyful as we live fully and deeply in a relationship of love for, trust in and service to the One who lives and loves in our hearts. The thing Rush Limbaugh and others do not understand is that falling in love with God leads us to do lots of idiotic, irresponsible, foolish things such as: giving our lives in the effort to bring peace & unity where there is division & hatred; loving our enemies & treating well those who persecute us; and working for an economically just and equal society even though such work may cost us a great deal. We do these idiotic things, we even put our lives on the line because the strength of the joy we feel is only exceeded by the depth of God's love in and through and all around us. AMEN.