

# God Is With Us To Save Us From Ourselves!

When the plan of God was made known to Joseph (as we heard in today's gospel) the name given to the child was to be *Jesus*, because he was to *save his people from their sins*. He was also to be called *Emmanuel*, meaning *God is with us*.

When Gabriel appeared to Mary and announced God's plan for her, she was told the child was to be named *Jesus*. It was added by the angel Gabriel, "*He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High...*" (Lk 1:26-38)

The Christological identity of Jesus is made clear in the writings of the early Church, a people trying to find its own identity. It was essential that the Church could give "a defining understanding" to Jesus.

Not only do we have these identities, but also those given us by the prophet Isaiah, as read below. Add to these our own "Jesus identifications" such as Lord, Savior, Son of God, and Almighty King, to name just a few.

The purpose and identity of Jesus go hand-in-hand. No matter how we study these and try to come to their base formula, their purpose is to show "*God is with us to save us from our sins.*"

We've spent 16 weeks studying how we can practice and develop an awareness of the presence of God in our lives. We've been to this juncture before. Christmas tells us point-blank: "***God is with us!***" The narratives of Christmas tell us of the rich and poor, the neighbor and the foreigner seeking the presence of God. They speak of how a whole people looked for "*The one who was to save us.*"

**God came to make himself present to us, so that we can daily make ourselves present to God.**

*A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah*  
*The people who walked in darkness*  
*have seen a great light;*  
*upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom*  
*a light has shone.*  
*You have brought them abundant joy*  
*and great rejoicing,*  
*as they rejoice before you as at the harvest,*  
*as people make merry when dividing spoils.*  
*For the yoke that burdened them,*  
*the pole on their shoulder,*  
*and the rod of their taskmaster*  
*you have smashed, as on the day of Midian.*  
*For every boot that tramped in battle,*

Understanding Christmas in any way less than this and we're probably celebrating Christmas as a yearly event rather than a daily, minute-to-minute experience, which is how God sharing his life is meant to be experienced.



Questions we need to ask ourselves every day and sometimes minute-to-minute should include the following as the initial part of a worthy examination — with the perspective of the fulfillment of scripture being realized today.

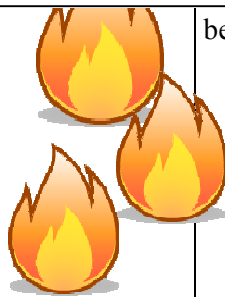
Do I allow Jesus to rule my life? Is he the King who judges justly, forgives my sins, and lifts up the oppressed? How am I aware of

## GOD FIRST

Year Two, Part 17

*The Prayer of Awareness*

the Prince of Peace active in my life, or coming to me through others? How do I allow this peace to calm my own concerns? Am I allowing the Lord to counsel me in difficult times throughout the year? Do I



believe that "God-events" maintain their power and effect as they are meant to be seen?

We remember, "God events" do not lose their power or effect. They acknowledge endless majesty and power, wisdom and strength, peace and presence, just as announced to Joseph and Mary, and through Isaiah the prophet.

Our prayer of awareness this Christmas is not to simply remember God coming to us, but also to see God present to us, and his purpose not having changed — that we may become more present to God.

This Christmas humbly seek the Lord in the stable — that of the heart — prepared for a King and Savior, a Prince and Messiah, a God-Hero.

*every cloak rolled in blood,*  
*will be burned as fuel for flames.*  
*For a child is born to us, a son is given us;*  
*upon his shoulder dominion rests.*  
*They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero,*  
*Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.*  
*His dominion is vast*  
*and forever peaceful,*  
*from David's throne, and over his kingdom,*  
*which he confirms and sustains*  
*by judgment and justice,*  
*both now and forever.*  
*The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this!*

**Isaiah 9:1-6**

# A Blessed Christmas



*From the entire Staff of St. John the Baptist Parish*

- *Ginger, and Suzie, and Bonnie, and Alice, and JoAnn, and MaryAnn*
- *Christie and Will, and Sr. Janet, and Ron*
- *Sandi and Rose, and Jane and Karen, and Anna Mae and Alexis, and their staffs*
- *Mr. B. and Mark, and Fr. Bill, and Fr. Tom*

*May we all have a Christmas that sees faith renewed, peace experienced,  
joy celebrated, and hope fulfilled for all people.*