

Fourth Sunday

*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,
which means "God is with us."*

Isaiah

By the time you reach into your seventh decade, chances are, you've experienced just about most of what life here, on Terra, has to offer, particularly the season of the coming of Him. Some of it is kind – this we should all strive for regardless of our personal circumstances. Some chapters are 'interesting' as my neurologist tells me as she finds something else. Some chapters are a true challenges – the refinement by the fire of the Omnipotent God Triune.

It is all about how you look at it.

As I sit here on a stormy afternoon in the Great Pacific Northwest, as is often, I think of my home parish, St. Wenceslaus. I miss them terribly. Then, I was offered the gift of the Secular Order of Franciscans and so, as in Gill's Pier, we found people of like mind.

Francis was beyond extraordinary by any measure. When asked who the greatest sinner was by one of his companions his reply was, "I am".

This holiest of men considered himself the greatest sinner?! In this simple revelation of history, I said to myself, "We are all the world's greatest sinners."

My lifelong experience with the way of Francis led me to revere the nativity scene. As a child my parent's tradition was to put one straw in the manger for every good deed. Most years were full of straw! Francis is credited with having made the first one. Every year when physically able, I have re-created his – though I added a bit of 'electricity'. The photos are all pictures of friends and relatives who made the Great Leap.



And so. I take my memories of the people I've met and wrap them deep around my soul. I find great peace. The kind of peace you find this year, particularly December 24th, the 'Eve' and December 25th, when the world stops for a few moments. I hold all in my heart and prayers daily. What better thing can we do?

- Love Him
- Love all others Created in His Image and Likeness.

And never forget – God is always with us!

Clement