

EDUCATION MINISTRIES

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Impending Arrival of Baby Jesus

“...Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” Isaiah 7:14

Although it seems as though 2020 has been dragging on amidst the COVID pandemic, I still find it hard to believe that somehow we are already at the second week of Advent! Our teachers and preschoolers returned from Thanksgiving break and immediately dove into Christmas preparations as there are only a few weeks before the holiday will be upon us. It seems like every year there is a bit of a rush and hurriedness to the season. I think that most of us probably would benefit from some gentle reminders to stop and take time to enjoy the beauty and holiness of the season, much like our young children do.

Perhaps we would be wise to take a page out of our preschoolers books and really look at the sparkle in the lights decorating the houses in our neighborhood or really take in the smell of cookies baking. Preschoolers don't stress about needing a gift for their parents that is "just right". Rather, they put their whole hearts into what they are creating in class and don't strive for unrealistic perfection. They sing and clap to new songs and listen eagerly when their teachers talk to

them about the impending arrival of Baby Jesus, a baby that was born among the farm animals and without a real bed.

Our young students can often easily relate to the story of the first nativity because many of them have babies at home and have some understanding of what it is like to wait for the new baby's birth. They also have some idea of how much care a baby requires. They know that interactions with babies need "gentle hands". Babies, of course, also depend on mothers and fathers for their food and clothes. Most importantly, like themselves, babies need much love.

We teach our preschoolers that Advent is a time to get ready for the arrival of Baby Jesus. It is a time to wait and prepare, much like what might have occurred at home when they were getting ready for a new brother or sister. We help them learn that Jesus is a gift from God. He was sent to us in order to show us how much God loves us. Many of our classrooms get out play nativity sets or make one of their own during this time. One of our 3-year old students recently showed me a toy baby doll that she had and proudly

introduced it as her "god baby". Later, I reflected on how simple yet powerful this concept was. It reminds me that God could have chosen to send some grandiose sign or person of great wealth and presence, but instead he sent a tiny baby. And this baby didn't come with fancy clothes or a big house. He wasn't born to royalty or an important leader of the day. In some ways, I think God knew that we would need reminding about what we truly should keep in the forefront when preparing for Christmas. We should not lose focus of His simple yet powerful message, a message given to us by the birth of a baby in a stable.

This year, we are almost being forced to slow down and minimize the busyness of the season because of restrictions related to COVID. Let us not waste the 'opportunity'. Let us take the lead from some of the littlest members of our faith community and not forget the gift of God's love this Christmas season.

To learn more about the wonderful opportunities that we provide, please visit our website at: preschoolatstfrancis.com or contact Shelley Freeman at shelley.freeman@stfrancisraleigh.org.