

**Jesus arrives with justice, mercy, joy and peace. (Parish theme for Advent; repeat with people)**

**I have three questions about Jesus' arrival.**

**Where is he arriving?**

**Bethlehem:** Smallest of cities: not a city, a town, a village

- **City of David: last of the 8 children of Jesse**
- **Chosen to be king of Israel**
- **Greatest King ever of Israel**
- **Today's reading: Too small to be among the clans of Judah**

**From you will come forth one who is to be the ruler of Israel;**

**He shall be peace!**

**Jesus arrives with justice mercy joy and peace.**

**To whom does he arrive?**

**Mary:** Most humble of young women

**A young maiden engaged to a carpenter**

**In the far away northern village of Nazareth**

**Can anything come from Nazareth?**

**From you, Mary will come Jesus, who will save the people from their sins. "Blessed are you among woman and blessed is the fruit of your womb."**

**Jesus arrives with justice mercy joy and peace?**

**How does he arrive?**

**How does he arrive now, to you and me, to everyday men and everyday women; average teens and youth, how do we who live in the metro area going about our daily lives, how do we get chosen to be the place where Jesus is to be born?**

**How do we, with Mary, bring for the Savior?**

**From you, Bethlehem will come the savior of the world.**

**And from you, Detroit, Southfield, Livonia, Farmington Hills.**

**And from you people of Corpus Christi Parish,**

**And from you, from me, from us, how will new life in the Spirit come forth from us?**

**(Pause)**

**(John Shea's comment)**

**Before Mary conceived Jesus in her womb,**

**She conceived him in her ear,**

**And she conceived in her heart.**

**Mary conceived in her ear**

**She listened to the Angel.**

**God spoke his Word into her.**

**Her whole life was open to hear God speak**

**(Blessed is the womb that bore you...**

**More blessed is the one who hears the word of God and keeps it.”)**

**She conceived in her heart.**

**She pondered what all this message of the angel might mean.**

**Then she conceived in her womb**

**She brought forth the savior of the world.**

**Does this pattern of conceiving new life happen today?**

**Oh, definitely YES. Let me give you an example.**

**Eight years ago a few of us in this insignificant square mile of Northwest Detroit which surrounds this church building, heard (point to my ear) the call from the Lord to give birth to a neighborhood group.**

- **The group did not have a name.**
- **The neighborhood was smaller than the village Bethlehem,**
- **It was more humble than Mary; it was just about 2,000 households living in small brick and frame two and three bedroom bungalow homes, a number of them boarded up.**

**Some of us gathered and pondered (point to my heart) what God wanted for this ragtag community. The group took the simple name of O’Hair Park Community Association. Its motto, “Love where you live.”**

**The neighborhood group began collaborating with many other insignificant groups of people who in the process of conceiving by listening to God’s word and pondering his will in their lives.**

- **Generous grants came from women religious communities: Daughters of Charity (for programs and a part time community organizer),**
- **Adrian Dominicans (little free libraries),**
- **Mercy Sisters (for youth activities).**
- **Members of the parish helped with annual neighborhood clean ups at which over 100 volunteers gathered.**
- **Parishioners who work for General Motors and Daimler Chrysler came yearly with co-workers to board up homes.**
- **Youth groups from schools and faith communities helped clean up the neighborhood.**

**The word planted in our ear and treasured in our hearts have been taking form in the womb of this community.**

Just as Mary and Elizabeth did in today's gospel, neighborhood people now joyfully celebrate the new life within them. For example, the annual summer celebration in O'Hair Park brings out over 500 people to just enjoy life. Surely, the Lord is in our midst.

(Pause)

Jesus arrives with justice, mercy, joy and peace.

It all begins in insignificant places: in the small village of Bethlehem, in the heart of a young engaged woman named Mary, at Corpus Christi Parish.

***Blessed are we*** among men and women. We too, with Mary and Elizabeth, have the opportunity to share the joy of new life with our world.

My brothers and sisters, **Jesus is arriving**. Let us go out and welcome Him.