

From Pastor's Desk



Pastor's Message December 2011

As we begin the Advent season, choices abound as stores offer deals to satisfy every kind of Christmas buying habit. To each of these offers we can say yes, or we can say no. As I thought about the Christmas story and the moment when Mary was greeted by the angel who offered her the news that she would bear God's son, I wondered, "What if Mary had said no – 'no, I do not want to do this thing.'?" We could hardly have blamed her. To say yes was a huge risk - her very life was at stake. Or, if her life was spared, she may have to live in disgrace. Had the angel not intervened with Joseph, she might not have had a man to provide for her in a society in which most women had no identity and no possessions outside their father's house and later outside their husband's house – since women were considered property.

But Mary, like her cousin Elizabeth, believed in a God who kept promises. And centuries before, that same God had promised Mary's people a deliverer, one who would rule "in the strength of the Lord." That God was a God who worked through common, ordinary people to intervene in history. That God was a God who gave strength and courage to those who allowed themselves to be instruments of God's will. So Mary said, "Yes, I'll do it."

Mary's yes was not a halfhearted, begrudging, resigned one. It was joyful yes, a thankful yes, a faith-filled yes. The tenor of Mary's willingness is beautifully clear in her response to Elizabeth. Today, Mary's responsive song is known as the "Magnificat" – named after the first word in the Latin translation. It is one of the great hymns of the church.

We, like Mary, are ordinary people. But, like Mary, we can be powerful instruments to help bring about God's will, whether that will pertains to saving our planet, combating racism, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, ministering to the sick, visiting the imprisoned, or raising our children with a keen sense of peace with justice. Are we saying yes to God's call to us to be instruments of God's love and mercy? Do we respond to God out of thankful, joyful, and faith-filled hearts?

This Christmas season let us take time to reflect on the ways God is calling us to bring His life saving spirit to the world. Will we respond with a faith-filled yes?

God's Peace and Joy be with you at Christmas and in the coming New Year.

Pastor Diane