

As we approach Christmas, I have been thinking a lot about what it means to welcome Jesus and to await His coming again. This has taken on a special character for me this year. As many of you may know, I became a mother for the first time this past June. My little boy will be 6 months old on Christmas Eve. I would like to share with you some of the fruit of my own prayer this Advent and hopefully help you understand how it connects to evangelization.

Before he came, in the metaphorical Advent season that was my pregnancy, I focused a lot on getting ready to welcome the baby. I read books, took classes, decorated the nursery all in the hope that I would be ready when he came. As any of you who are parents can empathize with, my husband and I were not ready. We knew in theory what to do with a baby but that was not the same as knowing our Robert. Only once he was here with us could we know what tactics actually worked to get him to sleep or what things would make him smile. Only now do we understand how snuggly and happy our little boy is and his mostly calm personality. We know that some people's well meaning advice does not work for our baby and that the joy of seeing him smile or hearing him laugh is better than anyone could have described. In short, it is so very different now that we actually know him as the little person he is and not just the idea of what we thought he would be. These thoughts drew me to spend Advent thinking and praying about what it must have been like for Mary to know Jesus in the way I know my own son. What it was like for her to come to understand God's personality up close and to know His love in that unique and deeply personal way. Jesus wants all of God's children, and you in particular to know Him that personally. Our relationship with Him won't look exactly like Mary's because it will be unique to us, but by the Grace of God it can be deeply personal and meaningful.

This is the hope of Evangelization. We want everyone here to have a deeper, more personal relationship with Christ and to invite other people to have a similarly personal relationship. Here at St. Elizabeth, we can do that through many ways. First, we can start by building our own relationship with Christ through prayer. We can come to know Christ by spending time with Him just like we would with any other personal relationship. We can also know Him by participating in the Sacraments. Finally, hearing about how God has worked in the lives of others around us and sharing how He has worked in our own lives can greatly strengthen our relationship with Christ. To give a personal analogy, I have never met my grandfather in person because he died before I was born, but I know him through the love he showed my dad. Similarly, we can come to know Jesus through the love he has shown to others, and our stories can be a great way to introduce someone to Christ.

There are several opportunities to do that kind of sharing here including Rescue Project (starting again January 13th), That Man Is You (Tuesdays starting again Feb. 4th) and a similar opportunity for the women of the parish (coming in God's time which the team working on this are all hoping will be very soon, but I can't promise a start date right now).

I hope that you have a very blessed Christmas and can experience Jesus in a more personal relationship with Jesus as we celebrate His birth.

Ashley Guinn