

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Dec 22nd 2015

I hope you are excited. I am. Three days to go. I recall my childhood in India where the week approaching Christmas was filled with joy and fun activities: sowing wheat and carrot tops for the crib, hunting for branches that could pass for a Christmas tree, sitting together with siblings and helping my mother prepare sweets to be shared with our (non-Christian) neighbors. My dad bought LPs or cassettes and we sang along. I do recall my neighbor—a boy of another faith—screaming at the top of his lungs, “You better watch out ... Santa Claus is coming to town.” Joyful times, indeed!

Three days before we celebrate the birth of Jesus and the Church helps us sing joyfully with two women—Hannah and Mary. Their songs reflect the experience of God’s wondrous grace in their lives: new life, salvation, and hope.

Hannah’s heart was breaking as she listened to Peninnah’s taunts, but God reversed her ill fortune. She offers Samuel to the temple; he will play a central role in God’s plan for Israel’s salvation. She sings (today’s responsorial) exulting God, for whom nothing is impossible. The power of God strengthens the weak, exalts the lowly, fills the hungry with good things, lifts up the poor, and of course, gifts children to barren women.

Hannah’s song is reflected in Mary’s magnificat. God, coming in the weakness of a child, will overthrow the powerful. God’s mighty deeds will bring about a reversal of fortunes (as noted in Hannah’s song). God has been favorable to Mary; she responds calling God “Savior.” Mary, the mother of God, gives birth to Jesus, who is God-made-man and who saves those in need. Hope has come for the lost, the last, and the least. Those who do not have need—the rich, the powerful, and the proud—are excluded.

Do I have a personal song of joy that I would love to share with others today?

Roland Coelho, S.J.-Creighton University's Graduate School