

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and shall call his name Immanuel.

A Christmas Message from Bishop Hoyme

Dear Friends of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin,

My wife Diane went into the woods yesterday and dug up a little pine tree of unknown origin and planted it in a simple clay pot. As she stood beside it she said with great pride, "Here's our Christmas tree!" The Christmas Queen she ain't. She is a Christmas minimalist at best. But she is one of the finest Christians I know. She just gets it.

She gets love. She gets grace. She gets creation. She gets generosity. She gets patience. She gets hope. She gets kindness.

And every year when we gather around the table for Christmas Eve dinner, I wonder, how was I ever so blessed to "get" her? I don't deserve her. I sure as heck didn't earn her and lord knows, I didn't win her. She is just pure gift.

We seem to be living in a time, and in a country, where being kind is a vanishing gift. I wish more people could spend time with my family at Christmas. If being kind was given a dollar value, I would be the richest guy in the world.

Maybe that's the gift we could all focus on this year. Just be kind. Love your neighbor. Love yourself. Or as my mom used to say, "If you can't say anything nice about somebody, don't say anything at all." She actually lived that way...until she turned 90. Then she gave herself permission to get a little snarky once in a while. But until then...

I have never quite gotten this Advent "wait" thing the church talks about...but there are lots of things I don't get. So this year, I'm just going to try to be a little bit more like the woman who loves me when I'm not kind. And I'm going to work on being a little kinder...to her, to my enemies, to my friends and to Jesus. Because, I don't deserve Him either.

Merry Christmas!

Rev. Robert A. Hoyme