

A NOTE TO PARENTS

The “Christmas spirit” can be hard to capture. As Christmas Day draws closer, we may be feeling tired, tense, vaguely guilt-ridden at spending too much money, and vaguely irritated with others in our lives for not noticing how hard we are trying to make the holiday a special one. Our society’s expectations are that, by means of hard work, imagination, and spending money, we can create the “merriest Christmas ever,” each year better than the last.

Earlier in the Advent season, our Scriptures suggested that we get ready for God’s coming into our lives not by making frantic preparations but by clearing space, “preparing the way of the Lord.” Now, in the story of the Annunciation, we see this put into practice. Mary is not asked to arrange for the salvation of the world all by herself, or to create the perfect environment for the Savior to be born into. It is God who has the ideas; and they look pretty unpromising by the standards the world uses. Mary is asked for her consent: she is asked to place herself in God’s hands, give God the room to work, make herself available to do what God is planning. She does not hide her surprise; she does not suppress her questions. She wonders out loud what God could possibly have in mind by asking her to conceive and bear the Savior of the world under conditions like these ... and then she says, “Yes.”

Here is a clue to what it means to “put Christ back into Christmas.” Putting Christ back into Christmas does not mean that we now have to work like crazy to create the perfect religious experience for our family, along with the perfect warm family feelings, the perfect gifts, and the perfect holiday foods. Putting Christ back into Christmas, in fact, may mean letting go of our own agenda, in order to let God give us the gift he has in mind. That gift may be something we would never have thought of. It may have nothing to do with recapturing wonderful feelings from holiday traditions that we now feel compelled to repeat every year. It will have to do with listening and looking, and waiting for God to send whatever “angel” may bear his message. Together, your family can choose to “be God’s servant, and do whatever he asks.”

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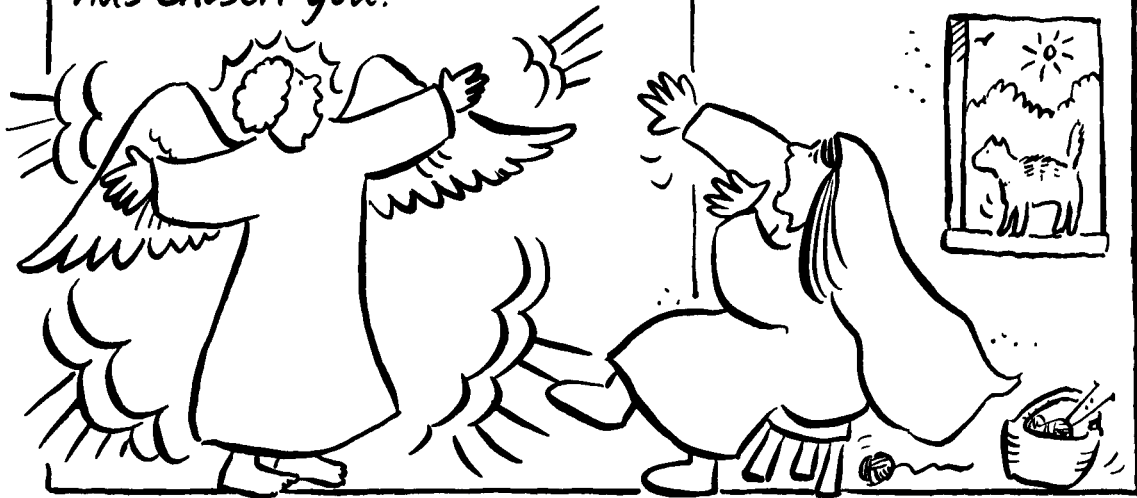
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ADVENT



GOD ASKED MARY TO BE THE MOTHER OF THE MESSIAH!

An angel came to Mary and said, "Hail! God has chosen you!"

But Mary was very frightened.



The angel said, "Don't be scared! God wants you to be the mother of his Son!"

Mary wondered how this could be. Then she said, "Yes! I will do what God wants!"



Advent is a time to say "Yes!" to God's plan. God needs us to help him make his world new, and fill it with love and peace. He needed Mary in one way. He needs each of us in our own different ways.

Which of these people are saying "Yes!" to God's plan? Which are saying "No"?

