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# The Fourth Sunday in Advent Isaiah 40:1-11; Luke 3:1-17; Psalm 100

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The Fourth Sunday in Advent  
December 20, 1987  
Isaiah 40:1-11; Luke 3:1-17; Psalm 100

Our oldest Christmas decoration is a small wooden crèche carved in the Holy Land. The manger, babe, parents, shepherds, wise men, and animals inhabit a wooden setting which Ray constructed our first year together. The softly blue-lit scene has surveyed all our Christmas seasons.

For us, this season and day have added meaning: our life as a family began on this day, 1966. The rejoicing normally associated with Christmas is intensified for us, and the advent of Stephen and Andrew have made it doubly so. Our experiences during past Christmases have shown us God's steadfastness, and the promise which the babe in the crèche brings.

Christmas is a time for children, for the promise of life and renewal which children bring. All nativity scenes include the Babe and His parents. Scripture tells us little of Joseph and Mary as parents, yet we know that they taught Jesus well. What uncertainties did they feel that first Christmas, and all the birthdays that followed? What anxieties went with them into Egypt? We know that they felt the joys, sorrows, and anxieties which we face with ours. We know also that God watched over their care of all their children, just as He does over us with ours.

The wooden crèche, background of our celebrations, symbol of continuity for all our Christmas seasons together, reminds us that God has shared our every experience. The Christ Child who came so long ago to bring us life is reborn yearly in our lives and worship. The gift God gave so long ago, He gives again and again.

He prepares the way, then turns to us, takes us by the hands, and says "Come, my child. Walk with me this day." So the small wooden figure in the manger smiles, and His parents reply in kind.

Ronnie and Ray Granade

The Fourth Monday in Advent  
December 21, 1987  
Isaiah 55: Luke 1:5-25; Psalm 116

Christmas has always been a joyful time and one generally filled with goodwill. Maybe it's sometimes stressful from packed schedules and deadlines and even the need to be cheerful when we don't feel that way. But on the whole, we certainly associate joy with the season. In our case, we added additional joy by—against parental advice, which held that our anniversary celebrations would always be lost in the season—marrying just before Christmas.

Our joy has been tempered most years. Each move has taken us farther from “home,” but our celebrations have always involved traveling to be with parents and extended families. The 500 miles we have traveled to get there each year since 1971 have caused us to travel on or near our anniversary. So the season has come to mean packing and traveling—not always joyful with a baby, or with children who delight in pestering each other (or their parents) and need to know “How much longer?” or “How soon can we stop?” or when the next rest stop occurs.

Only once have we failed to make the trek—a miracle in itself. Often we had discussed not going and moaned about the trip, the hassle, and the lack of Christmas Day traditions in OUR OWN home, and a lost anniversary. Yet yearly we continued our pattern. Then came the great ice storm. Anxiously we watched for a break which would allow us to escape south and east. Half hoping, half fearing that it would emerge, we waited. The break never came. We phoned our kin, and

celebrated in a different fashion than before. We've never done it again. We learned that our trek had been the right choice. Each year we continue the tradition of packing, making the trip, and celebrating with family "at home."

Perhaps more than any other, that memorable Christmas taught us about the God of whom Isaiah and the psalmist wrote. Like the Israelites, we learned that we could sing the songs in a strange land, for God joined us in joy, upheld us in uncertainty, and comforted us in sorrow.

Ronnie and Ray Granade