Testing God and wearying people • Breaking open the word

Readings

Isaiah 7:10-14
Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel.

Romans 1:1-7
Through him we have received the grace of apostleship.

Matthew 1:18-24
“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her.”

You can read the full text of this Sunday’s readings here:

Scriptures for the Fourth Sunday of Advent, Cycle A

Reflection

In the first reading, King Ahaz is told that he can ask God for a sign that things will work out for Israel while they are under attack. Instead of accepting the offer, Ahaz refuses to ask for anything; he doesn’t want to “tempt” God. Isaiah, speaking on behalf of God replies, “Is it not enough for you to weary people, must you also weary my God?” This kind of thing happens more than people think—people are frequently hesitant to approach God for fear of “tempting” him. But, the fact is, God wants us to approach, call him Dad, and ask for everything we need, or think we need. When we approach God in

an attitude of trust, God never turns us away. God gives us what we need, even when we're too foolish to ask.

In Paul's letter to the Romans, we're reminded that through Jesus' mission, we're called to the holiness of apostleship. In that apostleship, we bring the faith to those who have never heard about it (or who have never heard it represented properly), and to know what it is to belong to Jesus.

Then, we have the story of Joseph. He was going to be married to Mary, but found out that she was pregnant. If he told people about it, she could have been killed, so he decided to marry her anyway, and then get divorced quietly so that no one would think badly of her. God sent Gabriel in a dream to tell him what really happened. It might have been difficult for Joseph to trust what he heard in a dream, but he did. He believed that Mary was good and that God was going to do something wonderful through her. He stuck with them, and kept them both safe so that Jesus could grow up to be the Messiah for the world. It was through the trust of Mary and Joseph that what was promised to Ahaz would finally come to be.

Break open the word with your family

Kids

Have you ever heard a frustrated adult say, "Don't tempt me"? Do you ever "tempt" your parents by misbehaving? Do you ever feel weary from other people's behavior?

Teens

If God showed up and told you that you could have a sign, what would you ask for a sign about? What sign would speak most clearly to you? Would you be cool with a dream like Joseph had?

Adults

Talk about a time when you had to trust against your better judgment. What gave you the courage to trust?

A little lectio

The ancient practice of prayerfully reflecting on bits of Scripture is known as *lectio divina*. Want to try it out with your family? Head over to Lectio Divina for Kids to find out how to adapt this prayer practice for your kids.

A little Bible study

Want to do a little Bible study with your kids? Here are some tips:

- During Ordinary Time, the Church pairs the Old Testament and New Testament readings in a way that each sheds light on the other. Ask your kids to look for the common theme connecting the two readings. (Sometimes it's obvious, sometimes it is subtle.) How does the "dialogue" between the readings help you understand them better?
- Get a New American Bible, Revised Edition, and take a look at the footnotes for these readings. How do they change your understanding of what is going on?
- Take a look at the context for the readings—what happens before, or after?
- Read the NABRE's introduction to the book of the Bible that the readings are taken from. How does that help you understand the readings?
- If you don't have a copy of the NABRE at home, you can view it online at the USCCB website at the Daily Readings web page.

For even more resources for breaking open this Sunday's readings, head over to The Sunday Website.