



Advent Reflection for Thursday, December 15th

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Luke 2: 1-7

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Reflection by Ann Mellow:

I have always loved this passage, often the opening words of Christmas pageants. Like all good stories, it starts by setting the stage. We are swept back into ancient times, the time of Emperor Augustus. We are drawn to a specific part of that empire: Nazareth, Judea, Galilee, Bethlehem. We are told of family lineage: the House of David. And then, like the beginning of a movie that starts with a broad shot above the world and then brings us down to earth, we land in a small town where we meet our main characters: Joseph and Mary, in a manger, with their new baby.

This is Jesus's family origin story. Born into a very specific time and place, with a particular lineage, and into a particular family, he will live in and respond to his own, particular time. As it happens, his time is one of imperial power and expansion in which (some) people are compelled to be counted and documented, and riddled with social unease if not turmoil. He will preach in a temple at 12. He will throw out the money lenders. He will confront the power structure of Pharisees and Sadducees. He will feed the multitude. But, for today, he is just a newborn baby.

Like Jesus, each generation inherits a specific world, and each human being, again like Jesus, is given a singularly unique life to live. In this rather dry yet super-specific description of Jesus' beginnings, the

questions that arise in my mind and heart are: How shall I live as a follower of Jesus in *my* time?" How shall I use the time and place / have been given? How shall I increase the good work and share the Good News that Jesus brought to the world thousands of years ago? How shall we, together, increase the kingdom of God on earth in *our* time?

Ann Mellow lives in Ditmas Park with her husband, Peter. She serves as a co-warden at Holy Apostles. She has recently retired from working at the National Association of Episcopal Schools and still serves consults and serves on boards at a couple Episcopal schools.

