Fourth Sunday in Advent — December 22, 2024

From the Desk of Fr. Leo

One of the great revolutions of the modern world was the emancipation of women. Admittedly, it hasn't still achieved complete equality between the sexes. Women's rights are better recognized in the statute books than in reality. But there has been extraordinary progress in a relatively short period. Women were only given the right to vote in England in 1918. I am always taken aback when discussing this subject to find that it invariably adds to a vigorous attack on the church. It is argued that the reason women were so long deprived of their human rights was largely the fault of the church. For almost two-thousand years the church has relegated women to secondary citizenship. There are undoubtedly strong arguments in favor of that view. A couple of years ago, the Pope apologized to women for the church's attitude towards them in the past. But there is still no place for women in the hierarchical structure of the church. Its structures are made, and look like they are remaining that way. Its laws were designed by males, and celibates at that. Its theology has been, at least until very recently, an exclusively male domaine. Women were consigned to the home, or in the case of the chosen few, the convent.

Yet if one takes a more global view of women, it is remarkable that the liberation movement has only taken off in what used to be termed "the Christian West" that is, in Europe and North America, whose philosophy and values are largely derived from Christianity. Their sisters in the Muslim world, if recent reports be true, are almost going in reverse with the re imposition of the "chaddor" veiling all but their eyes and this even in countries as westernized as Algeria. Things are little better in Buddhist and Hindu countries yet women are still assigned inferior roles in society. Probing a little deeper into why women's emancipation is confined almost exclusively to the Christian world, I would argue – though sometimes I seem to be in a minority of one – that is due to the remarkable position Mary holds in the Catholic tradition. Admittedly nowadays, she doesn't get a s often a good press.

But this is all a recent aberration. Look at the great Renaissance artists, which Italy also produced, and their depictions of Mary in all the glory of her womanhood. You can easily recognize here the person who was the subject of that marvelous compliment paid to Christ in the Gospel: "Blessed is the womb that bore thee and the paps that gave thee suck." And I suspect that this more authentic view of Mary has made a deeper impact on the popular imagination.

The authentic gospel image of Mary has exercised an enormous influence on the religious imagination of Christians for almost two-thousand years. And it still continues. Recent research on young Catholics in America shows Mary to be their most powerful religious image. It would be strange indeed, if she, whose very first recorded concern was for another woman, had not contributed to the emancipation of her sex.

Fr. Leo Alban Asuncion

Mass Intentions for the Week

Tues.	**December 24**	**4:00PM**
Children of the Parish		
		10:00PM
People of the Parish		
Wed.	**December 25**	**9:00AM**
People of the Parish		
Port Costa		**11:00AM**
People of the Parish		
Thur.	**December 26**	**11:00AM**
Bob† & Lydia (50th anniversary)		Family
Fri.	**December 27**	**11:00AM**
Myrna Leal†		Angelina and Christi
Sat.	**December 28**	**4:30PM**
Sandi Edmondson †		Hoffman Family
Sun.	**December 29**	**9:00AM**
Thanksgiving		Bernas Family
Port Costa		**11:00AM**
People of the Parish		

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