

Lent

by Peggy Guerrero

With Lent knocking at February's door we can be pretty sure that most people have had their Christmas lights safely put away for several weeks. The season of Christmas is over, but we would be mistaken if we said that Lent is not a season to celebrate the Incarnation.

“If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.” These words from the first letter of John are not the easiest words to read in the New Testament. But they do give us an opportunity to consider how to bridge the mystery of the Incarnation with the season of Lent.

We pray the name Emmanuel, God-with-us, during Advent and Christmas. And we celebrate God-with-us in the Eucharist at every mass. We profess our belief and our love for God in our personal and in community prayer and celebration, in devotion and in creed. But what about the other part of what the letter asks? “...whoever does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.” The author of this letter is paraphrasing the words of Jesus who tells us that the greatest law is to love God, and that the second is like it; love our neighbor as ourselves. Neither the writer of the letter nor Jesus minces words. It isn't multiple choice. This law is exactly that, law, the rule by which we are to live.

Which brings us to the fast approaching season of Lent. The mystery of the Incarnation invites us to consider all the implications that come with the reality that God became part of God's own creation in Jesus Christ. We are invited to consider one another in a new way. This lent we can ask ourselves each day, “Have I loved my neighbor, who is created by God, who share created-ness with Jesus, the way God asks me to love them? The way I deserve to be loved?” Lent allows us to focus on whether our words and actions match what we say we believe about mystery of the Incarnation. It gives us a chance to walk the walk, to follow in Jesus' footsteps.