

The Significance of Saying “Yes”

On September 11, 2001, the bombing of the World Trade Center and the crashing of planes in various parts of the United States set off a chain reaction that we have never seen in our lifetimes. The airspace simply closed and planes were ordered to land. As time went on we were able to find out that planes were re-routed to various remote locations where the passengers and crew would be safe. There was no plan for this to happen, no drills that took place beforehand, but airports around the world had plans for Y2K if planes simply stopped working. Remember when we weren't too sure what would happen in the year 2000?

The town of Gander in Newfoundland, Canada has a population of around 10,000. This is equivalent to the population size of Ware, MA. There was a little used airport in Gander that, all of a sudden, was to house 38 planes filled with 6,800 people as passengers and crew. Now, Gander had actually planned for an emergency and had conducted drills for such an emergency, but they never thought that they would have to spring into action to use them.

What did the residents of Gander do? Did they form picket lines and demand that these foreigners be taken out of their country? No! They knew the significance of what had happened. What did they do? They found ways to house,

clothe, and feed all 6,800 people as they converted schools, gyms, private homes, etc. to make sure that the 6,800 had a way to exist. There are great stories of impromptu barbecues, gatherings, and parties as people worked and rallied to make the best of a bad situation. In essence, the good people of Gander and the surrounding towns simply said, “Yes”, when called upon to be of assistance in now what was a world-wide crisis.

Can you imagine if the residents of Gander hadn’t responded in the affirmative? People would have been stuck at the airport with limited facilities and very little food for a week. Their “Yes” allowed everyone to come together to offer extravagant hospitality and warm welcome to people who didn’t speak their language or understand what was happening.

Let’s go from 2001 back 2,000 years. A much quieter event took place in the town of Nazareth, in the region of Galilee, which is now part of the country of Israel. A young Jewish girl, barely a woman, was betrothed to a man named Joseph. Luke’s gospel gives us the account of the visit of an angel to a young woman named Mary. When “voluntold” that she had been chosen for the honor of giving birth to the Messiah, she could have responded with numerous arguments of why she couldn’t be put in this position.

What did she do? She said, “Yes!” “I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it happen to me as you have said.” Now, there was no one there with a quill pen and

parchment to capture those exact words, so we have the translation from the writer. Exactly how she said it is not important; the importance comes from the response in the affirmative. As a result of Mary's yes, look what happened. Who knew that her answer would set off the remarkable things that have happened in the 2,000 years after her answer?

We are constantly asked "yes or no" question: "Would you like more coffee? May I get you anything else?" Teachers and parents are asked countless questions every day. But all of us are asked, "Will you allow the Savior to be born in your hearts this year? Will you allow yourself to be a bearer of the good news of the Reign of God in your homes, workplaces, and in public places?" I don't know how many of us are asked to stand up and give verbal testimony, but, as we have said, our actions often speak louder than words.

Christmas is almost upon us. We have a beautifully decorated church. The New England Brass is with us in Westfield to share in the fantastic music of the season and bring us together. Like the good people of Gander, most of us love a good party. While a twelve-day festival is proclaimed for us through January 6 or 7, we have some inner work to do. I invite all of us to spend some time this week to see if and how we can offer our own "yes" to God and allow the Savior to be born again in our hearts and through us.

