

4th Advent 2008

Robert VerEecke, S.J.

The virgin bore him in her womb with love
beyond all telling.—From the Advent preface

I know that many of you have seen A Dancer's Christmas at one time or the other over the past 28 years. It has been a labor of love and an wonderful gift for me to have created this beautiful work of art that tries to tell the story of "love beyond all telling" not in words but in movement, gesture, dance. Today is the last performance of A Dancer's Christmas so I am filled with extraordinary gratitude for all the grace that has come to me through the many people who have been Angels, who have been the heralds of good tidings for me and for so many others. Or if you aren't comfortable with angels, with the many God-sends that have come my way. You know "god-sends". They are the special people in your lives who gift you with grace, who may not greet you with the word "Hail" or how do you do, but simply, Hey, how ya doing?

That's my first question for you today, Who are the God-sends in your life? Who are the people who grace you with their love, their support, their presence. Think about them and give gratitude for them.

One of the god-sends in my own life is a young man named Joel. And I need to tell you about him. He is a dancer in a dancer's

Christmas and I went to his father's funeral yesterday at St Mary of the Annunciation church yesterday morning. There is a wonderful story I would like to share with you about Joel. About 7 years ago, I received an email from Joel's father, Len. I had never met him but he had found my contact information. He wrote to me about his son, Joel, who was a very gifted dancer and singer who was born with Downs syndrome. Len, his father told me this story. A few days earlier his wife Rosemary had gone outside into their backyard of their home in Melrose and noticed a single page of the Boston Globe on the ground. They were not Globe readers and so she wondered where it came from. When she looked at the page she saw that it was from the arts section and when she showed it to Len then were surprised and delighted to read about Fr Bob and his production of A Dancer's Christmas. As Len and Rosemary tell the story, it is as if an angel made a special delivery of the single page of the Globe into their backyard since their son Joel had been praying for a sign from God about how he could use his talents for God. Needless to say I was moved to tears when I heard about this extraordinary course of events that brought Joel into my life.

I tell you this story about Joel not only because of the wonderful way in which these events transpired, or the fact that I was at his father's funeral at St mary of the annunciation church on a weekend where the gospel would be the annunciation, but more because through Joel, I have understood a little more of the one "full of grace" mary

of Nazareth and her "yes" and loving response to her God. You see, Joel has this wonderful transparency. He speaks of God so freely. He dances for God. He sings out of love for God. There seem to be no barrier between God and him, no defenses. This beautiful person is so transparently open to God and all that God wants to give to him. I think Mary must have been that way. One so attentive to God, God's word, God's presence, God's embrace. Not at the expense of her humanity. Not without pain, not without grief and grit and wonder and worry. Mary of Nazareth lived her life with this radical openness to God. And that did not free her from suffering but she knew this intimate bond of friendship with God (what could be more intimate than to bear a child in her womb with love beyond all telling) At the end of the annunciation story the word that is used to describe her relationship with God/ doule/ servant/ even slave. One whose life is totally belonging to the other. It's the same word used for Jesus in the Phillipians hymn.. He emptied himself and became a "doulos" a slave/ a servant. The story of Mary and Jesus is a story of "love beyond all telling"

So my second question to you today is what is the story that you need to tell and what is your story of love beyond all telling?