God With Us.

When I walk the streets of New York City, dashing past busy commuters, avoiding getting hit by a fuel belching bus, or a fast food delivery man rushing by on his bicycle, I remember these words spoken to the prophet Isaiah, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." Isaiah 7:14 (NIV)

"Immanuel" means "God With Us". What a
profound thought. I need to have this assurance with me all day long. God with us, better interpreted, God with me. God with you. God with each of us.

There is in these words a power that few of us realize. God with us, is beyond a religious catch phrase. It is more than sitting in a pew listening to a choir. It is a much deeper and more powerful theological fact that goes beyond our understanding. It is a reality that we need to bring with us from the moment we rise in the morning and walk outside of our respective doors, into our respective village, towns or vast metropolitan areas, like New York City.

God with us.

Do you get it? Do I get it? Did the shepherds get it, on that dark night when "An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.'" - Luke 2:9-11 (NIV)

I like what the angel told those shepherds, "Do not be afraid". Having spent a good portion of my young life at the age of 5, in a hospital, due to an early eye problem, I am familiar with the fear that lurks in a dark hospital room, listening to the moans of other young lives, crying for the touch of their mother. These memories have helped me to be a better listener, when I hear of the fear in someone's voice who is facing a difficult medical challenge, or perhaps some other grievous situation that comes to each of us.

What kept my young spirit alive during those days are the same words that do so today - God is with us. I could not imagine living a balanced life, with all of it's challenges if it were not for this assurance. It is what brings us together in community. A shared sense that we are all blessed with the power of a loving God who is with us, in everything we go through.

Imagine if our faith based communities where a place where we all were really caregivers to each other. Lifting up each other in prayer and listening to each others fears, hopes and needs. It is our opportunity each day, to practice God’s love with everyone we come in contact with. To be mindful of the fact that God is with us and also with our fellow human beings.

In a clear and focused parable spoken by Jesus, we read what can turn
a church into a community of caregivers, a community that turns no individual away for any reason and understands the gift of salvation that Christ has given to each of us. A place where people are willing to listen and care deeply to what we are saying.

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you sick or in prison and go visit you?'

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

- Matthew 25:34-40 (NIV)

When we read these words I trust we can all sense a need for each of us to be available to anyone we may meet not only those who are in visible poverty but also those who are thirsty in their soul, who are hungry for something more than food.

We all have this need for someone to listen, for someone to care, for someone to love us. Do not be afraid. God is with us.

I will be sharing more on this subject tomorrow, Saturday, December 17, 2011 at a series we call A Conversation With The Word in the historic sanctuary of Manhattan Church, 232 West 11th Street, NYC. The conversation begins at 11:15 a.m. with music and a shared sense of our communal need for the blessings of God.

I hope you can join us.

God bless you and give you peace.

Best regards -
Tony Romeo, Pastor / REACH-NYC

Click here for map of location of Manhattan Church
Donations to REACH-NYC help us in our efforts to reach out to the people of New York City. REACH-NYC is a recognized tax-exempt corporation by the IRS and all contributions are fully tax-deductible.*

Contributions can be sent payable to "REACH-NYC" and mailed to: REACH-NYC, P.O. Box 651, North Salem, NY 10560.

*A receipt will be sent recognizing all contributions at the end of the year for tax purposes.

Join us tonight, Friday, December 16 at CAFE REACH
232 West 11th Street
at 7 p.m.

Cafe Reach is a
REACH-NYC sponsored event.
Members of all faith based traditions are welcome.

Bring a poem to share, a story to tell or an instrument to play.
Come meet in a relaxed and candle lit atmosphere.
A warm welcome and hot drink will be waiting for you.