

## Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Advent

This is a conflicted Christmas for many reasons and on many levels. It is hard to taste the anticipation because what we anticipate, no matter how we act out our anticipation, is not what we really want.

We are tired, many are angry, lots of people are fearful, and many, many grieve the loss of loved ones that will always be absent from Christmas.

We bristle at the idea of being told not to do what we always did and dearly want to keep doing and, of course, some will go ahead and do what they want to do. My hope for them is that they do not get or give something for Christmas that they cannot take back.

I offer these thoughts from Karl Rahner, the great Jesuit theologian of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was beyond doubt one of the most significant Roman Catholic thinkers ever, but one who, also, was a very human and loving pastor wrote these words about the significance of Christmas:

“And now [God] says to us what he has already said to the world as a whole through his grace-filled birth: "I am there. I am with you. I am your life. I am your time. I am the gloom of your daily routine. Why will you not bear it? I weep your tears -- pour yours out to me, my child. I am your joy. Do not be afraid to be happy, for ever since I wept, joy is the standard of living that is really more suitable than the anxiety and grief of those who think they have no hope. I am the blind alleys of all your paths, for when you no longer know how to go any further, then you have reached me, foolish child, though you are not aware of it. I am in your anxiety, for I have shared it by

suffering it. And in doing so, I wasn't even heroic according to the wisdom of the world. I am in the prison of your finiteness, for my love has made me your prisoner. When the totals of your plans and of your life's experiences do not balance out evenly, I am the unsolved remainder. And I know that this remainder, which makes you so frantic, is in reality my love, that you do not yet understand. I am present in your needs. I have suffered them and they are now transformed, but not obliterated from my heart. I am in your lowest fall, for today I began to descend into hell. I am in your death, for today I began to die with you, because I was born, and I have not let myself be spared any real part of this death.”

They are words and words can be just words, but they can also be sources of wisdom that, like Mary, we can ponder in the fallowness that many of us are finding this Christmas.