December 20, 2015

I was associate pastor for three years at St. Francis Xavier parish in Kansas City right after my ordination. A tapestry was hung in the sanctuary during the Advent season. It was a depiction of Mary looking nearly nine months pregnant. To be honest, it was not a great piece of art. Yet, I found the image striking as it is infrequent to see an obviously pregnant Mary bearing the Christ child.

The wider culture smothers Christmas in sentiment. The holiday season is insufferably cute. A simple cure for such claptrap is to ask any mother how “cute” her last few weeks of pregnancy were. Now, imagine what it was like for a young woman 2000 years ago in Judah.

Our faith is rooted in the central belief that God became one with humanity. None of the sufferings of our human condition were unknown to Jesus. That goes for His mother as well. Christians have the audacity to claim that the Lord came into the world in the same way as every single person: vulnerable, weak and utterly dependent. The devotion we show to Mary flows from the care she showed her son.

Fr. Dan White, S.J.