

Homily For Tuesday of the First Week of Advent - Year I

St Peter's 8:30am/7:00pm Masses - Nov 29, 2022

Isaiah 11:1-10 "The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord will rest on him."

Psalms 72:1-17 "Precious in his sight is the blood of the weak and needy."

Luke 10:21-24 "The seventy returned with joy (and) Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit."

Begin Again, This Time With Joy

Introduction

There was a well known soprano who sang with a church choir. At rehearsal one Advent, she was going through the hymn, *I know That My Redeemer Lives*. She sang well, as she always did. But when she sat down after the hymn, the choir director seemed troubled as he looked at her. Finally, he interrupted the rehearsal, saying: You sang well as you always do. However, I am not convinced that you believe your saviour lives indeed. Why don't you take a few moments to reflect on what you are singing and take it from the beginning. Well, she wanted to object but agreed to his request out of respect. Then everyone was quiet as the pianist began the opening chords. This time, when she sang the last note and sat down, there was something very different. A few had a tear in their eye. The director himself was quite emotional as he said, "Now I know that you believe your saviour lives."

Advent is not just the start of another liturgical year, is it? It's not the same old hymn that we know how to sing. This is a time to go deep into our hearts to stir up the love we have for God, to turn around again and see, as if for the first time, who we already are as beloved children of God. This is the season of preparation for the way of the Lord within us and around us, turning again to God, who reveals himself to us, and who reveals us to ourselves by his birth and life and death and resurrection. This is the time that we show that we believe our saviour lives and is coming again into the world.

Isaiah

Isaiah foretells the coming of a great Messiah. A great image is the shoot from the stump of Jesse. Jesse is King David's father, both of them ancestors of Jesus, the Saviour. It looks like that tree has been cut down but there is still a little shoot. This is an image of hope. That's what it looked like for Israel, yet there was that one line, that one hope, in the midst of great trial.

The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him who is that shoot, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. These are what we call the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. We teach them to Confirmation candidates. Usually they can recite them, but I am never certain that they know the deeper meaning.

The one who comes will be our judge. Thank God, because he will judge with righteousness, not as the world judges, with eye and ear, but will see the hearts of all.

Luke

When the seventy disciples come back from sharing the Good News of God's salvation, they are full of joy. They see the kingdom of love beginning to unfold. And what is it that they can see, that kings and prophets could not? It is the unfolding of where all of history has been going. Not a human dream, like transhumanism, but the true hope of salvation, which appeared to be a stump, which looked like it was cut down.

Their joy and Jesus rejoicing, even though rejected at times. What did they see and hear that kings wish they had seen? Luke connects this joy to the Spirit. The disciples, who went on their mission without money bag, sack or sandals, receive a great reward in their experience of life in the Lord. The disciples have seen and heard not only the Messiah but also the works done in his name. These works consist in redeeming the world from Satan's clutches.

Why does Jesus rejoice? Jesus exults in the working out of God's plan of sheer goodness, which is to make us share in his own blessed life, the life that Jesus experiences fully in his human nature. Jesus thanks the Father that He has hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent. It's not a compliment. It is a wonderful thing that God gives us various gifts. The danger with any gift is to imagine it belongs to us or that we have deserved it in some way. Pride in ourselves and in our powers is always close at hand, our puffed up image of ourselves.

Advent is a time for turning to Jesus Christ, the greatest of all surgeons, and ask him to cut the pride away from our souls. Advent is a time for letting go of our phony sense of control over nature. Do not rejoice in your accomplishments but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

Isaiah's vision of a heavenly fulfilment of peace and joy is now revealed to children, not to the wise. These are the children, the disciples, for whom Christ gives thanks in his prayer to the Father.

Call To Conversion

We need Jesus. The stump of Jesse, King David's line, looked dead. That same stump which Isaiah described and which Jesus fulfilled, has become the joy and the happiness of our hearts should we open those hearts to it. We want to use this Advent season to make room in our hearts. Let us journey towards this goal. Let us make offerings to purify our hearts.

The lion of Judah has conquered the grave. The root of David has died to ransom the slaves. Does our God intend to dwell again with us this Christmas? He does. He did. He will again. Let us not watch this moment pass by. Let us prepare well.

We prepare to celebrate again the coming of the Christ into the world, the one who is the fulfilment of every human longing, the shoot from the stump of Jesse. Left to our own devices, we can only dream of a humanly devised society of justice and peace and prosperity for all. But no real or imagined society of our own making can bring it about.

“Give thanks to God the Father, through his Son, in the Holy Spirit, because in his great love for us He took pity on us, and when we were dead in our sins he brought us to life with Christ, so that in him we might be a new creation” (St. Leo the Great).

Today, and always, we Christians are all invited to share Jesus' joy. He, filled with the holy Spirit, said: “Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike” (Mt 11:25). Very rightly, this fragment of the Gospel has been called the “Magnificat of Jesus” by some authors.

Every year, we seek to purify our souls by a new interior conversion. During this time, we have to make the first commandment a reality, to make God first in our lives. Do we love anything else more than God? I don't really want to hear this myself, but the reality is that if I don't pray every day, and make that a priority, then God is not first. If I confess that I just got too busy, as if that is a legitimate excuse, someone can say to me, well did you make time to eat. Well, of course. Then you love food more than God. Did you watch TV? Yes, well you love TV more than God. The stump of Jesse, which looked dead, becomes my joy.

Key Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *Behold, the Lord will come, and all his holy ones with him. And on that day there will be a great light.*

Collect: *Lord God, consoled by the presence of your Son, whose coming we await, may we be tainted no longer by the corruption of our former ways.*

Isaiah: *A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord ... With righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth ... The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them ... They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain. For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord.*

Psalms: *May righteousness flourish until the moon is no more. He has pity on the weak and the needy. From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight. May all nations be blessed in him.*

Luke: *The seventy returned with joy ... Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said: I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants ... No one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Then turning to the disciples, Jesus said: Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. Many prophets and kings desired to see what you see.*

Communion Antiphon: *The Just judge will bestow a crown of righteousness on those who eagerly await his coming.*