

## **Homily For Tuesday of the First Week of Advent - Year II**

### **St Peter's 8:30AM/7:00PM Masses - Dec 3, 2019**

**Isaiah 11: 1-10** "A little child shall lead them."

**Psalm 72** "Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son."

**Luke 10: 21-24**"No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal."

### **Docile To The Holy Spirit**

#### **Introduction**

One of the key things our young Confirmation candidates learn is the list of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. We hope they will learn much more than that but, If they learn nothing else about the Sacrament, they should go away knowing that God intends to instill in them the same Spirit that was in Jesus at his baptism and on the Church at Pentecost. That Holy Spirit will confer tremendous gifts to help them lead a holy and grace filled life.

And yet, what we too often find is that the hearts of so many of our young people have already been somewhat darkened to the action of that Spirit being given to them. It is as if, instead of being given a vaccination against the flu, they have been vaccinated against the Spirit's action in them. They have already been told in a thousand ways in our culture that access to the life-giving divine spirit is not a real thing.

#### **Isaiah**

Somewhat surprisingly, that list of gifts is not taken from the words of Jesus or even from one of the New Testament letters. It's from this exact passage from Isaiah that we heard today. It is attached to this great prophecy that we hear during Advent, which we will hear again this coming Sunday as well:

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. 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.

Isaiah witnessed the fall and utter destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel to the Assyrians. As God's prophet, he saw the same fate for the southern kingdom of Judah, ruled over by the descendents of David. The stump of Jesse looks like the end of David's line. It is an image of life cut down, life empty of God's Spirit and the gifts that come with it.

The Catechism explains beautifully how this is supposed to work. In paragraph 1830: "The moral life of Christians is sustained by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These are permanent dispositions which make man docile in following the promptings of the Holy Spirit." I love the image of being "docile to the Holy Spirit." It means that we allow the actual life of the Holy Trinity - the love between Father and Son from all eternity - to act IN us, without resisting it.

The Catechism goes on to say, in the next paragraph: "The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord. These gifts belong in their fullness to Christ, son of David. They make the faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspiration."

### **Luke**

The seventy returned from their evangelizing ministry full of joy because they had experienced a temporary foretaste of the gifts of the Holy Spirit which would be given to the Church at Pentecost. The Gospel passage today also tells us that "Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit", which is the love between the Father and the Son. It inspired him to immediate prayer: "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." The wise and intelligent are those who fill themselves only with the wisdom of the world and leave no room for the promptings of God's Spirit. Those who are infants are those who are docile to those same promptings.

Jesus rejoices and gives thanks to the father. Why is he rejoicing? Jesus exults in the working out of God's plan of sheer goodness, which is to make us share in his own blessed life. Even so, that joy would not be for everyone.

Bertrand Russell was a well known 20th Century atheistic philosopher. On his death bed, he was asked by a Christian friend: Don't you think you should be prepared just in case there is a God? What question would you ask God if he exists. He said: "Ok, I would ask Why didn't you give us more evidence."

But this is exactly how it works. To whom does Christ reveal the Father? Anyone who is seeking. Anyone who is docile to the Holy Spirit. The joy of the Holy Spirit is open to those who want it, who seek it, who ask for it. Jesus is not randomly deciding who gets the ticket to heaven and who has to wander around in darkness. He's referring to those who are seeking and those who aren't. The first group has already found God, or they will sooner or later find him, because God gives enough light for that. The second group is not seeking God. They will not find him because to seek is to find. Jesus provides the light for that search. He IS the light by which the Father is made known.

## **Call To Action**

St. Francis Xavier made many converts to Christianity. He was a great preacher and teacher but there is something even more important than that which made his success. He had a zeal for the Gospel and for the souls of those who were longing. There was a man docile to the Holy Spirit. There was a man, just like the 70, who was full of joy at the souls of people receiving the Good News of Jesus Christ and being baptized.

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. With the eyes to see and the ears to hear, we can experience that joy no matter what is going on in the circumstances of our lives.

With Jesus, the inner life of the Trinity becomes my joy. The stump of Jesse, which looked dead but is alive in Christ, becomes my joy.

I conclude today with some questions for your reflection: How is your Advent journey? Are you thinking in ways that will lead you to be open and docile to the Holy Spirit? Are you allowing the light of Christ to open your eyes to see what people have always longed to see and what is now fully open to us in Jesus Christ? Are you ready to rejoice, with Jesus, in the Holy Spirit and to give thanks to God for revealing himself to us today?