

## Homily for December 10 2016

## Third Saturday of Advent

When middle C is struck on the piano the piston of bones in your inner ear vibrates exactly 256 times a second. Each day you think about 50,000 different thoughts. When you flex your hand you are using seventy different muscles. On the surface of your body there are as many bacteria as there are people on the surface of the earth. (I should have skipped that one.) The mystery of your birth, the mystery of the love you feel, the mystery of the deepest part of you are all most improbable. You are an incredible contingency.

Sam Keen wrote, "I suspect that we are all recipients of cosmic love notes. Messages, omens, voices, revelations, and appeals are all part of each day's events. If only we know how to listen, to read the signs." Our everyday life isn't everyday. The surface of what we see and hear isn't all there is. When you laugh, when you cry, when you feel something happening inside, open yourself to the possibilities. The potential of the life that we have been given is breathtaking. Open your eyes. Listen carefully. Pay attention.

In the biblical tradition such attentiveness is called wisdom. Wisdom is a sharing in God's ability to see and judge things as they really are. God reveals himself as God by his just judgments; as God, he sees things without disguise, as they really are, and deals with each according to his truth. Wisdom is a sharing in God's way of seeing reality.... We cannot possess it unless we are united with God ... Only if we let ourselves be cleansed of the corruptibility of the "I" and come thus gradually to live by God, to be united with God, do we come to a true inner freedom of judgment, to a fearless independence of thinking and deciding, that no longer cares about the approval or disapproval of others but clings only to truth. Such a purification is always a process of opening oneself and, at the same time, of receiving oneself.<sup>1</sup>

Elijah and John, highlighted in our readings, lived with this kind of wisdom. They opened themselves to the Lord and were therefore able to receive their vocation as ones who spoke on God's behalf. Both Elijah and John the Baptist were prophets. Elijah was the first and John the last. They are like bookends. Between them the rest of the prophetic witness is contained. All of the prophets had the same message. Look at the world and live in the world with the wisdom that comes from God.

In the reading from Sirach we have a summary of Elijah's life. At first his miraculous works are recounted and his assumption celebrated. Then there are three dimensions of his mission described:

1. Destined to calm the wrath of God before it breaks out in fury

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<sup>1</sup> Liesen, J., & Manhardt, L. W. (2009). *Wisdom* (p. 215). Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road Publishing.

2. To turn the hearts of parents to their children
3. To restore the tribes of Jacob.

God's wrath is his holy and righteous anger directed in a controlled and calculated way against human sin. Human sin is the fruit of living foolishly and is the opposite of wisdom. The great sin that preoccupied Elijah's life was committed by Queen Jezebel and her weak husband King Ahab. Jezebel's actions were always governed by the corruptibility of the I. Elijah worked tirelessly for hers and her husband's conversion so they could see the cosmic love notes God was sending. But it was to no avail and God's wrath was visited on Jezebel in a most gruesome way. She was thrown out of a window and eaten by ravenous dogs.

Elijah was also called to restore family life and the religious life of the people. For during his time most Israelites had followed in the religious practices of Queen Jezebel, worshipping the Baals. This pagan worship

was characterized by child sacrifice – an early form of abortion, and violence and mistrust between the people of Israel. Elijah called people back to God and therefore to the re-establishing of family and community relationships. It was these themes that all of the prophets who followed him would also announce. But sadly, as was true with Elijah, so with many of the other prophets, their words fell on deaf ears because people could not see that our everyday life isn't every day.

There is so much more going on here than meets the eye. A theme that John the Baptist, the second Elijah, would announce as he ushered in the age of Jesus the Messiah.

How easy it is to live life on the mundane level where we are just trying to get through another day. It is a life that is mono-chromatic. Everything is shades of grey. But when we can raise our sights and see what John the Baptist saw and Elijah saw, life will be more conflict ridden but meaningful. Conflict ridden because we will challenge the underlying assumptions by which so many live. Meaningful because we are not governed by the approval and disapproval of others but share in that line of people who like Elijah, John the Baptist and Jesus are discovering the potential of the life that we have been given is breathtaking.

Our Collect for today says all of this poetically when we pray:

***May the splendour of your glory dawn in our hearts, we pray, almighty God, that all shadows of night may be scattered and we may be shown to be children of light by the advent of your only begotten Son.***