

Homily For Friday of the 2nd Week of Advent - Year I

St Peter's 8:30am Mass - Dec 9, 2022

(OM - St. Juan Diego)

Isaiah 48:17-19 "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you for your own good."

Psalms 1: "Happy the man who does not follow the advice of the wicked but delights in God's law."

Matthew 11:16-19 "We played the flute for you and you did not dance."

For Our Own Good

Introduction

Some of us might be of a generation when one parent or the other disciplined us with the words: "This is going to hurt me more than it does you." I only heard that a couple of times. I didn't believe it. Another one of those phrases that came along with whatever discipline was being meted out went like this: "This is for your own good." Again, I would like to meet the child who agrees with that. But children grow up and become adults, at least on the outside. We take with us the lessons we learned from our childhood. If the discipline was too harsh, we can carry childhood trauma with us into adulthood. God knows we have broken parts of us, but Jesus takes on our shame and brokenness on the cross so that we can be redeemed, renewed, restored. But many of us finally realize that our parents really did mean the best for us through discipline.

Isaiah

One does not have to go very far in the Bible to find out that this is exactly the image of God whose love shows itself as loving discipline. Isaiah speaks of this today. The Lord God is your redeemer. He does not give us laws that are meant to burden or break us, but they are good for us. Obedience to God's laws lead to true freedom, true happiness. The more faithfully we follow Jesus the happier we will be. That's the joy the saints have. Could God speak any more plainly than these words from Isaiah: "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you for your own good, who leads you in the way you should go."

Luke

With the entry into our time and space, don't we Jesus, the Son of the Father who loves us, repeating this same message, this same admonition. Be like children who, whether they understand it or not, allow the discipline of the God who loves, who desires our true happiness. But in today's Gospel passage, Jesus speaks of an unfaithful generation. It sounds like he is referring to the children of Israel alive at that time. However, throughout the Bible, this expression refers to several faithless generations, some severely so.

Jesus uses a proverb of the day. It seems that, at weddings, boys would invite their friends to dance and at funerals, girls would sing laments, inviting their friends to mourn. Here, sounding the flute refers to the call of Jesus, who spoke of himself as a bridegroom enjoying the celebration of a wedding feast. Likewise, the singing of a dirge represents the witness of John, in particular the fasting he encourage among his disciples. The disagreeable playmates who refuse to dance or mourn are the crowds that declined both the festive invitation of Jesus as well as the penitential summons of John. John did not celebrate but fasted and lived the penitential life of John.

The crowds of that generation who resented John, said he must be possessed by a demon. Jesus came celebrating the entry of God into time and space, eating and drinking, attending dinner parties, so he was labelled by some as a glutton and a drunkard who did not submit to the discipline of the law. Nothing could please the faithless generation of John and Jesus. They turned their backs on feasting as well as fasting. Like disobedient children, they rebelled, wanting nothing to do with the Messiah, or the one announcing his coming. That sounds awfully familiar. Are we part of a faithless generation, children who refuse the discipline that seeks to make us into a joyful people?

Psalm

That generation had a prayer book called the psalms. Everyone learned those psalms. Many would have spent their childhoods memorizing most of the 150 psalm prayer book. It's so wonderful that today the Church has matched today's

Old and New Testament readings with Psalm #1. Everyone would know these opening verses: "Happy the one who does not follow the advice of the wicked, but delights in the law of the Lord, and meditates on it." Happy is an odd translation. The word is "blessed." Mary is blessed because she delighted in the law of obedience to the Lord. No one who understands what God is doing will refuse to dance with joy at a law which seeks our blessedness.

St. Juan Diego

Yesterday's feast of the Immaculate Conception reminds us, among many things, that God is the master of time. We rightly say that our Lord entered into time, and that at that moment in history, through his birth, ministry, death and resurrection, he opened the gates of heaven for us. However, God further showed his mastery over time in that, even before he took on human flesh and identity, he was able to give his mother the gift of freedom from original sin. We could say that he pre applied the grace of his resurrection to his mother.

But God is the master not only of every time but also of every place. On this feast day of the Mexican peasant, Juan Diego, we celebrate how God made himself known in the vastness of the Americas. He did not do this by military might. He did it by the witness of two humble childlike servants, Mary and Juan Diego.

On December 9, 1531, Juan Diego was in a hurry to make it to Mass and celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. He was stopped by the beautiful sight of a radiant woman who introduced herself as the mother of all those who lived in his land and asked him to make a request to the local bishop that he should build a chapel in her honor there on Tepeyac Hill, which was the site of a former pagan temple.

Over the next few days, Mary appeared to him several times to encourage him to persevere with her request. The bishop wanted a sign, which Mary provided, the famous image of Mary which appeared as Juan opened his cloak which contained the flowers that Mary had arranged there.

News of Our Lady's apparitions brought millions to faith in Christ.

Juan Diego's imprinted cloak has remained perfectly preserved from 1531 to present time. The "Basilica of Guadalupe" on Tepeyac Hill has become one of the world's most-visited Catholic shrines. Juan Diego was canonized in 2002 by Pope St. John Paul II as the first indigenous saint from the Americas.

Call To Conversion

Pope Benedict XVI said that Jesus "is the God-who-comes", and we look like "the-man-who-goes away." Jesus-God, however, is coming. God's sign is the Baby who later went to the cross for us. In that way, it can be truly said that our sin hurt him more than it hurt us. Let us be receptive to the Lord, even when he disciplines us. After all, it truly is for our own good.

St Mary of the Immaculate Conception, pray for us!

St Juan Diego, pray for us!