

Homily for the Second Sunday of Advent
December 8, 2019
By Nick Thompson

My great grandmother on my father's, father's side was full blooded Cherokee Indian, a convert to Christianity. My father, a convert to Catholicism, said she was a good and loving woman who could twist an ear right off the side of your head. My great grandfather on my mother's, mother's side was a gambler on the Delta Queen, a riverboat out of Louisville Kentucky. Story goes that he had six or seven wives up and down the Ohio River valley and maintained all these families until he was shot cheating at cards in April 1901. My grandfather on my mother's side, a French Roman Catholic from birth, fathered thirteen children. He died of black lung after years of working in the coal mines of Kentucky. After his death my grandmother moved into a three-room flat above a bar in downtown Louisville. During the Great Depression, she opened her own backyard laundry and raised all thirteen children to be good Catholics. Our heritage, our roots somehow contribute to the person we become. Some roots are cobwebs best left skeletons in the corner of a dark closet, others are buds that blossom like David from the stump of Jesse. Each of us has roots that can be traced back to Noah, to Abraham, to Adam and the very creation of mankind. Because we exist, not one link in the chain of

our ancestry can be broken! The past is set in concrete. All of time has contributed to our individual creation and the creation of our moment under the sun, our presence in the here and now.

Isaiah tells us, "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as water covers the sea." Even now I look out over an ocean of souls sharing a common Baptism: Baptism "in a spirit of wisdom and of understanding; a spirit of counsel and of strength; a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord." Our origins are intricately intertwined within God's creation of time. My roots somehow include each of yours and yours mine. All roots lead to God. Psalm 72 cries out. "May his name be blessed forever; as long as the sun his name shall remain. In him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed all the nations shall proclaim his happiness." So then, just as our physical heritage is inextricably tied to God, our spirituality, our soul our very being traces its origin, its conception to God, to the Body of Christ. Like the roots of our physical ancestry we can not separate ourselves from our spiritual roots.

We can however deceive ourselves, lie to ourselves, choose to become spiritual cobwebs, choose to alienate ourselves from God, choose to cause division within our community by introducing disorder, choose to destroy our own souls and thus disturb the balance between love of God and neighbor. We can choose sin. If we make the decision to separate ourselves from God through sin our spiritual roots become

diseased and we begin to see ourselves as just physical organisms. Physical organisms are self-serving, so we find ourselves unable to sacrifice anything for the good of others. Our personal well being, our enjoyment, our self-satisfaction becomes all that is important in our life. When we make this decision John the Baptist warns us that, “Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

St. Augustine points out that “before God can deliver us from evil, we must undeceive ourselves.” We must change our minds, reorient our decisions towards God and move from cobweb to blossom. John the Baptist says we must repent. John is quick to let us know that just being sorry isn’t enough. He says, “Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance.” M. R. Vincent points out that, “mere sorrow, which weeps and sits still, is not repentance. – Repentance is sorrow turned into action; into a movement toward a new and better life.” You see action is required of the penitent. Acts of contrition “I confess to you my brothers and sisters that I have greatly sinned,” confession “Bless me Father for I have sinned, and ultimately satisfaction, Corporal and Spiritual acts of mercy: feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned, bury the dead, give alms to the poor, instruct, advise, console, comfort, forgive, bear wrongs patiently. If sin is abandoning the Father’s house, then repentance is returning to

it. True repentance hates sin because it has discovered and felt God's love and yearns to repair the damage done. What keeps us from destroying our cobwebs and blossoming into productive children of God? Is it a lack of sorrow, of contrition, is it fear or pride that holds us back from the confessional or is it dread of the change that will have to occur in our own lives to repair the damage done?

During this Advent season and throughout the year on Thursdays at 6:30PM and Saturdays at 4:00PM Confessions are available here in the church. A joint reconciliation will be available as well at Christ the Good Shepherd on December 18th beginning at 6:00PM. Let us all begin the process of repentance, the process of preparation of our soul. So that we might Glorify God for his mercy and feel the spirit of the Lord resting upon us. Remember what the late William Nevins said, "He that waits for repentance, waits for that which can not be had as long as it is waited for. It is absurd for a man or woman to wait for that which they themselves must do." And if anyone asks, "Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?" I don't mind you replying, "Well Deacon Nick said."