

December 8, 2019

Second Sunday of Advent

Last Saturday evening I went to Overlake Hospital to anoint one of our parishioners. After the visit as I was walking down the hall, I noticed a man, moving slowly with a walker and the help of two nurses and his wife. The woman wore a hooded maroon colored sweatshirt that read, "Deming Log Show." Most of you know that I grew up in Deming and that my dad and uncles were all loggers. To this day, a good number of my cousins are involved with the Deming Log Show, which is a four-hour show of competitions built around the work that loggers do. Naturally, I had to ask the woman if she was from Deming. She said no, but that her husband goes to the show almost every year because he was a logger from Snohomish. When he turned around and saw me with my collar, his eyes got big and he said, "Are you a priest? Do you have communion with you?" I said that I did not but that I would be glad to pray with him. We walked slowly to his room. On the way to his room, they told me that their names are John and Jen. John shared the story of his conversion to the Catholic Faith, that he and his RCIA sponsor meet every Thursday with a group of men to pray and how they have been such a great support for him. He asked if I could bring him communion, which I did the next day. Jen said that she almost didn't wear her sweatshirt because she thought that some people in the city might take offense to loggers, but she decided to wear it anyway. We both agreed that God led her to do so, because I never would have spoken to them had it not been for that sweatshirt.

The work Advent means "coming". St. Bernard preached of the three comings of Jesus Christ, his birth, his coming at the end of time, and his coming as we walk the path between his birth and his final coming. The readings today speak of the message of how we are to walk the path together between the first and final comings of Jesus. So too did my walk with John and Jen. Isaiah speaks of how in the end, hostility between opposing factions will be no more, the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the kid, the calf and the young lion will be together in the peaceable kingdom of heaven. Romans says, "Welcome on another, then as Christ welcomed you." I thought of Jen who had the courage to wear a Deming Log Show sweatshirt to a hospital in green-conscious Bellevue. When John the Baptist speaks the Advent message of repentance, he is speaking about changing

our ways of thinking and acting, to let go of unfair judgment of others. Harsh judgement of others makes us into a brood of vipers.

We walk the path of faith together with the situations and people that come to us. Right now, as the people of God of the Church in Western Washington, we are aware of the religious women and priests who served us for next to nothing and who now are in their eighties and nineties. The cost for their care in their final years is often beyond far what they were able to save. We are also aware of young priests like Fr. Carlos who may one day need care in the final stage of life. The Archdiocesan Campaign entitled, "Called to Serve as Christ" will help us to address those needs as well as the needs of parishes. Today is the opportunity for you to join over 200 parishioners who have already made a pledge to the campaign. Your pledge, or if you are not able to make a pledge, your promise of prayer for the success of the campaign, is a concrete way to walk the path of faith with our religious women and our priests who given their lives to teach us, to serve us and to love us.

Last night I had a dream. In the dream as the ushers passed out the pledge envelopes, people jumped up to grab them and one women waved her hand saying, "You forgot me!" I was so moved by the response that I said, "Your response shows me that you love your priests and you love me. You know what, I love you too." Today is our day to turn that dream into reality.