

December 6, 2020

Second Sunday of Advent

Many of you know that Fr. Carlos became an uncle again on Tuesday when his new nephew, Daniel Enrique was born. All ten-plus pounds 7 ounces of him! The birth of this little guy was an occasion of intense joy for his family because after ten years of waiting and hoping to have a second child, even after thinking that it just was not going to happen, he finally arrived! As joyful as this birth is for them, it means real change in their lives. Their first son, Derek, is now a big brother, and he is excited about that, but at the same time, he will no longer be the center of attention for his parents. The new parents, now in their early forties, suddenly have the task of parenting extended by ten years. They will now need to put off some of the plans that they had for travel after Derek leaves the house. The new joyful arrival demands change

The season of Advent is a time for us to reflect that when Jesus arrives in our lives, it demands change, that we build a straight highway and raise the valleys of our lives, that we leave aside all selfishness, anything that is associated with sin. Jesus calls us to lower the mountains; that we bring down to our lives the high gifts of faith, hope, love, to our personal lives and to our world. Maybe you noticed that the words of the Entrance Antiphon for Mass today alerts us to the ways that Jesus arrives in our midst. The Antiphon says that, “the Lord will come to save the nations and the Lord will make the glory of his voice heard in the joy of your heart.” The Lord comes to save the nations, he comes for all people, everywhere at all times. The Lord’s voice will be heard heart means that that Jesus comes to each individual, to each person in an intimate way. The preaching of John the Baptist announces that Jesus comes for all nations and for every person in a way that goes beyond what anyone expected. The coming of Jesus signals a new beginning that calls us to make a new beginning in our lives.

Today we read from the beginning of the Gospel of Mark. The Gospel of Mark by-and-large is an invitation to When John the Baptist announces the new beginning that Jesus will new beginning that Jesus will bring by offering a baptism of repentance with water and promises that the one to come will baptize with the Holy Spirit. Jesus is a new power, a new beginning, a re-creation. John’s words of

preparation for the coming of Jesus fulfill the words of the prophet Isaiah, "Here is your God! Here comes with power the Lord God, who rules by his strong arm." His strong arm is greater than any power or authority here on earth. At the same, Isaiah tells us, he comes like a shepherd that feeds his flock and leads his ewes with care. There is a gentleness for every person, for every heart who hears the voice of the shepherd speaking to them personally. No one does this like Jesus.

The question for us is, are we ready to join the Lord is the new beginning that John the Baptist announced? Are we ready to give our lives completely to him? Are we ready for the change that love demands?

The Gospel of Mark is much more than just telling us what Jesus said and did. Even more, the Gospel is about forming us to be a new people, a people who speak and act the as Jesus Did. When Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit it is so that the Spirit of the Risen Jesus will live in us, so that we may become a new people. Baptism transforms us, we become temples of the Holy Spirit, they are no longer our own, they belong to Christ. When we gather as a community, the mystical body of Christ, the Church. As members of the Church Jesus fills us with the Holy Spirit to be the presence of Christ in the world. How can we truly prepare our hearts, have we "made a straight highway" for the coming of our God? I have two suggestions.

The first is to and spend time five, ten or even fifteen minutes doing an examination of conscience, maybe even using the second reading from today's Mass, 2 Peter 3: 8-14. If you are able, consider celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation. Fr. Carlos and I are available by appointment and we have also added extra times for confession on the Wednesday nights of Advent at 7:00 pm.

The second is to bring God's mercy to the poor. This week I invite you to make a financial gift to Catholic Community Services, which serves those most in need in every corner of the Archdiocese. The easiest way is to go to stlouis.org/ccs. You can also go to the parish website home page, scroll down to the Virtual Announcements until you see "CCS Give to the Poor." Care for the poor opens our heart to the coming of Christ who was born in a manger.