

Homily for Sunday Mass
December 15, 2019
Year A – Matthew 11:1-11
----Father Michael Grant George Cadotte----

In life, as in faith sometimes, we can either focus on what we see wrong, what we did not get, and issues and problems that plague us, or we can look to what we can do right, what we have and find gratitude in that, as well as making an effort to look beyond the moments of strife now to what could be positive in the future.

Isaiah did this in his prophesy to the chosen people. In our first reading today (IS 35:1-6A, 10) Isaiah spoke of the return of the exiles enslaved by the Babylonians, to Zion. He used colorful earthly examples to drive home his message, the desert, "...will bloom with abundant flowers..." and he echoes a phrase that appears hundreds of times in the Bible, 'fear not' and continues on to say to us that we should rejoice with joyful song. All of this while his audience are enslaved and taken from their homeland. Isaiah uses detailed and rich descriptions of physical life in his oracle of the eternal life that is to come.

Then our second reading picks up with James' letter reminding us to be 'patient' and do not 'complain' but keep 'your hearts firm' as if to finish the thought from our first reading. Do not go dark my sisters and brothers focusing on all that is wrong in the world or in your life. Do not give up but hang in there, be patient and strong of heart, for not only are better days coming, but the salvation of the world itself! Therefore, do not fear but rejoice and fill your heart and words with joyful song.

In that vein I want to touch on a common human trait that I am sure all of us have found ourselves in, getting what we want and not recognizing it at the moment or even for a long period of time. We find John in this very situation in our Gospel reading. Did not John the Baptist say in John 1:29, when he sees Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"? He knew then who Jesus was so what gives? Why then is he sending his disciples out, while he waits his fate in prison, to ask if Jesus is what he already knew he was?

One possible explanation that is often looked to as an answer is that John begins to really 'get it.' That is to say, he begins to realize that the Messiah is not coming to judge, condemn, and send into the eternal hell fire all of us who are outside the law: the non-Jewish people, those that know the law but fail to follow it, and those that are the enemies of the chosen people. John begins to understand this and is looking for confirmation through his messengers that Jesus is not the Messiah of punishment and conquering but the Messiah of love, peace, hope, and light.

It seems to make sense that John has begun to understand the prophecies of the messiah in a new way. This cousin of his, Jesus, was making no effort to gain power. In his preaching and ministering to the poor, the sick, the lame, the blind, and the deaf he was a messiah of peace, of healing, of life. This was not an agenda of condemnation. John, in his damp, confining cell with little light, discovered the light of Isaiah's prophecy. John gets it. God is the creator and sustainer of life. That is Jesus' mission: he is to bring us to life. And not mere existence, but abundant life. Despite all the terror of the Babylonian Captivity, Isaiah saw the presence of the messiah as an agent of abundant life, transforming even the sterile, dry, and foreboding desert. [1]

Homily for Sunday Mass
December 15, 2019
Year A – Matthew 11:1-11
----Father Michael Grant George Cadotte----

And therein lies the challenge for each of us today. This is what John discovered in his dark cell and a reminder for us during times of darkness in our lives. This new realization of John and the prophecies of old and the stories of the coming of Jesus bring me such joy. It is not the decorations and the festivities of the season, but all of that does serve as a reminder of this knowledge that Jesus is the light of not just the world but our very hearts, including mine, and thus that brings my heart great joy of what is to come for my salvation and yours. It is the joy of the life that Jesus brings to each of us in unique and, every loving ways, that challenges us to see it, focus on it, and not allow the dim of life to cloud it from our view.

On this 3rd Sunday in Advent called Gaudete [Gawd-A-Tay] (meaning rejoice), let us truly rejoice in life. Let us rejoice in the salvation of life that Jesus, the light of the world, the Lamb of God, has proffered for us. And as we reflect on this, let us live out the joy of this fact with not only our own lives but the lives of all people. Not just those people that look like us, not just people that live within the borders of our country, or only speak English, but ALL people. That is the radical realization that John had in his Ah-ha moment. Jesus wasn't looking for power he was wanting to love. And he, by word and example, showed us that love extended to the faithful, yes, but even more importantly, to the immigrant, the poor, the sick, the sinners, and the lowest of societies low, however we want to define them as.

All life is precious, but in so saying and believing, we must truly live out that call of faith. We must look to the life of those who suffer mental illnesses, those who lack basic health care, good people who are trying to care for their families and keep them safe in this country, the increasing poor education of those in the lower social economic classes, and the care of elders who have paved the way to our future and are no so often discarded. All these people are precious and loved by Jesus. All these people are part of God's rich and vibrant tapestry of life that we are called, through Jesus' example, to love and protect. They are us, and we are them.

So, go forth with great joy, rejoice in your salvation that Christ's pending birth brings, and do so by loving those that Jesus loved which so often you will find on society's margins. And when we begin to achieve this true call of life, we will truly begin the proper Advent journey to the manger, to our salvation, as paid for with a cross on a hill. AMEN

---Citations---

The New American Bible: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2010

ISBN 9780529064844

1. Carol & Dennis Keller. <<https://www.preacherexchange.com/volume2.htm>> 12/13/2019