

Prepare the way of the Lord

2nd Sunday of Advent – Year B

IS 40:1-5, 9-11 , PS 85:9-10-11-12, 13-14, 2 PT 3:8-14, MK 1:1-8



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In our Gospel, we hear that John the Baptist fed on locusts and wild honey. For our younger listeners, locusts are like grasshoppers with voracious appetites. They swarm in the millions, darkening the skies. They eat all foliage bringing devastation to the community food supply. Wild honey, as in ‘milk and honey’ is a sign of abundance. John’s diet describes our lives. We experience the abundance of honey and the destruction of Locusts. Our lives are touched by good times and some not so good.

Our second reading reflects the common belief of the period that the end was coming in their lifetime. 2000 years later, we are still here. Of course, by the computation offered in the first part of this reading that is but two days for the Lord. Despite Jesus telling us that we, “...do not know the day or the hour,” ^{Mat} 25:13 society likes to look for signs. The fact is, we do not know. That does not diminish John’s message. Our behavior, whether we are preparing for the end of the world or our own death, matters. As Christians, we are to be people of compassion, in the good times and especially in the bad.

As I reflected on these readings and Spirit, I recalled a memory from early childhood, at about four or five years. I had fallen ill and was running a fever. The fever was high enough that mom kept coming in every 15 minutes or so to check on me. She repeatedly sponged me with cold water and when that did not work, she phoned a neighbor woman who had six children of her own. Mom asked if she had any alcohol on hand that she could use. Now in wee hours of the morning, this good friend hurried over with a bottle of alcohol to rub me down. By dawn the fever broke. To this day, I remember the care these two women gave me.

*“One mightier than I is coming after me.
I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals.
I have baptized you with water;
He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”* Mark 1:7-8

In this time of pandemic, we remember who we are as people of faith. In good times and bad, we are to be people of compassion, an extension of that Holy Spirit. We are to put the wellbeing of our community ahead of self. We wear a mask as a sign of our care for each other. Today, some refuse to mask, putting self ahead of community. That is a selfish and devastating public health practice. There is no freedom for the community in that. There is no sense of citizenship.

Like my mother and neighbor who cared for me in my illness as a child, they brought compassion and love in difficult times. That is the Holy Spirit of which John speaks. That is the Holy Spirit that we are asked to bring into the world. Christ’s presence in the world is known through our interaction with one another. There is an ancient custom of bowing to one another in greeting. The gesture is made recognizing that the other is also the image and likeness of God.

There are times of honey and locusts. In both, the Holy Spirit is with us. That is our hope and joy in this Advent season. God is with us. John the Baptist asks us to act in our world with that knowledge and understanding.

In the wonder of God’s creation, in the midst of a pandemic, there is hope. Not seen for 800 years, the Christmas Star will be visible this year in the fourth week of December. Let us keep watch in the night for in the cry of a newborn God touches our lives with His most Holy Spirit.

All scripture quotations are taken from. (1987). *The New American Bible, Revised edition*. USCCB.

Note: Due to Covid-19 this homily was not delivered in person but posted on the St. Thomas More Catholic Student Parish website.