

2020 December 13

Third Sunday of Advent

Reading:

First: Isaiah 61.1-2a, 10-11, "He has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed." (1b)

The Psalm: Luke 1.46ff. "The Lord has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty." (53)

Second: 1 Thessalonians 5.16-24, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances." (16-18)

The Gospel: John 1.6-8, 19-28, "He came as a witness to testify to the Light." (7)

He grooms and prepares!

John the Baptist is appealing to the people of the Judean countryside to prepare the way for the Messiah to come. In fact, these people have been waiting for him for a very long time. However, John's appeal did not reach many. People were expecting the Messiah. He came but all did not see him. A few saw. These were prepared by him. The Baptist recognized him standing among the people who could not did not recognize him.

Mary recognized and saw him, for nine months with her inner eye and in her contemplation, and then with her physical eyes. St. Joseph too contemplated, and waited wholeheartedly to see him and he saw. The shepherds heard the good tidings and they really searched, and found, and recognized him in a child born in a stable and laid in a manger, wrapped up in swaddling clothes. The wise men of east alone saw the star, which was there on the sky, and most others did not see and even those who saw it did not recognize its significance.

Why and how is that only these few saw and not the many out there? There is only one reason we can figure out. Our preparations are always incomplete and never to the point. He has to groom and prepare us. In fact, he has to take birth in us. If not we too will not see. Look at those who got the privilege of seeing, touching and being touched by the Messiah! They were humble, simple, poor, not greedy, absolutely with no pretensions, and with hearts fully open and receptive, and responding to the call of God. These days in our times we see great decorations and colorful lighting on both sides of the streets and around the houses. They seem to be preparations for the festival season. Hardly anyone makes it visible what the season is, and what the festival she or he prepares for. There is hardly any nativity scene, hardly any depiction of the characters in Christmas. Most are not ashamed in celebrating Christmas without Christ, or better stated, they are ashamed to include Christ in Christmas, they are ashamed to speak about God. Maybe, the people of Judea in those days might have been ashamed of their God, of their waiting intently so long for their Messiah.

Since we do not allow God to touch us, groom us, and heal us, and since our hearts and minds are so far away from God and his Christ, we do not and we cannot see Christ in our hearts and in our midst. We do not see him in the heart of our next-door neighbour, and definitely we do not invite him into our hearts and homes, and so into our decorations. Our world and our times are not ashamed to celebrate a 'holiday season', which was known as Christmas holidays, and which was instituted to celebrate the birth of Christ, the Messiah. Is our world any different from the world of John the Baptist whose wilderness voice was not heard or recognized? However, along with the Baptist, we who believe in him must persevere in crying out from the wilderness of this busy and mindless world, "prepare the way."

Fr. George

(The readings of the day are given at the beginning. The numbers in parentheses refer to the quotes from them. Good to go through the readings beforehand to properly understand the Reflections)

