

2nd Sunday of Advent A 2007 (Deacon Pat Hall)

Homilies are aids to encountering the living Word.

Please read the scripture passages that this homily hopes to explore.

Isaiah 11:1-10, Romans 15:4-7, Matthew 3:1-12

The readings can be found at: <http://www.usccb.org/nab/120907.shtml>

Well, how is your pregnancy going?

If you were here last week, you found out you were pregnant this Advent season.

We felt the excitement of anticipation.

We acknowledged fear and anxiety.

We heard the call for a major reorientation of our lives to accommodate a new person.

I ask that you continue to hold that image of pregnancy as we wait and hope in gratitude for the God who took on our humanity in a stable 2000 years ago,

a God who abides with us in the very souls around you,

and the God whose coming is imminent, but in a time we can not foretell.

I ask you to hold that image when we hear the words of the Gospel today:

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”

One can almost hear the echoes of thunder in those words:

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”

So how do we embrace these images of the transcendent and of the intensely personal?

Paul tells us that it is in the imitation of Christ, accepting Jesus as our brother, who experienced everything in this life that we have.

We were created to be in harmony with one another in keeping with Christ Jesus.

“In humbling himself, he has given us an example to imitate.

Through his prayer, he draws us to pray

and by his poverty he calls us to accept freely the privation and persecutions that may come our way.” (CCC 520)

John the Baptizer prepares us as he prepared the Jews of ancient Palestine.

Many came with a hunger.

They came from all walks of life, the poor, the outcast, the privileged and the powerful.

John insulted the Pharisees and Sadducees by calling them the brood of vipers.

This is holy trash talk.

There’s nothing like getting an emotional edge by accusing your opponent of being the spawn of all that slithers.

What did the Pharisees do to merit that insult?

They had traveled across treacherous terrain to avail themselves of the spirituality that John had to offer.

But did they come to *get* something or did they come to *give* something?

It’s the difference between a sentimental heart and a committed heart.

A sentimental heart comes to Mass to hear inspiring words.

A sentimental heart tugs at the cries of the poor.

A sentimental heart sympathizes and says “Something should be done.

I should do something about that, sometime.”

A committed heart is more than one that is disciplined or conscientious.
It is a heart that is given, a self that is given to another.
We know what that looks like in our relationships, in our marriages and in our vocations.

John prepares us to give ourselves to Jesus.
The act of giving one's heart goes beyond what we can do solely with our human will. This act requires the grace of the Spirit. Isaiah records the gifts of the Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and the fear of the Lord (CCC1831). We pray for these gifts whenever we offer up the "Prayer for Discernment" at Mass.

John tells us to produce good fruit as evidence of our repentance.
Our tradition cites the fruits of the Spirit as: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control and chastity (CCC 1836).

This repentance includes our regret or remorse for our offences.
But it is more than that.
This word shares the same root as pensive: thoughtful or reflective.
In re-pentance we are also called to re-think, to re-orientate ourselves to Jesus.
This is how we give our hearts to Jesus.
This is how we give ourselves to each other, the presence of Jesus in his people.

Can we come to his altar today with that re-think, with that re-orientation, with that gift of heart which is simply a response to Jesus' gift to us?
Can we give our hearts to our brothers and sisters around us, ahead of us, behind us as we come to communion in harmony with one another in keeping with Christ Jesus?

Isaiah prophesizes what that would look like:

"Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them.
The cow and the bear shall be neighbors, together their young shall rest, the lion shall eat hay like the ox.
The baby shall play by the cobra's den and the child lay his hand on the adder's lair."

Who are the lions, bears and cobras in our lives?
When we give ourselves to Jesus, we have faith that he can bring all together in peace.

As I close, I would like to pray;

Father, may our contrite hearts be open to the joy you offer: Jesus.
May your grace fill us, burst and overflow immersing those around us in the baptism of your love. Amen

Repent.
Be pregnant.