

In the Gospel, Jesus cured the lame, the blind, the deformed, the mute, and many others. Then Jesus multiplied seven loaves of bread and a few fish to feed the multitude. When we gather as a community at church, we bring our brokenness with us. We acknowledge our sins and ask for forgiveness. “I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do.” And the priest prays these words for the forgiveness of our venial sins. “May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.” Jesus offers us healing through the forgiveness of our sins.

We then sit down to hear God speak to us through Sacred Scripture. Readings from the Old Testament, the Psalms, an Epistle, and the Gospel all speak of situations in the past. If we listen carefully and think quietly a little bit, we can draw a connection with our own lives. It is as if Jesus is speaking directly to us. He is teaching us and helping us with the struggles that we have. With the homily, the priest or deacon help us to connect the words of scripture with the struggles of our own community.

Jesus is concerned for the crowd that has had nothing to eat for three days. He feeds them to provide nourishment. They go away satisfied. When we gather as a community, Jesus is also concerned about us. We are called to fast at least for an hour ahead of time. We do this to help us be more aware of how dependent we are on God. The gifts of bread and wine are blessed by a priest who acts in the person of Jesus Christ. The words of the priest are not his own, but the prayer of the church based on the words of Jesus at the Last Supper. The priest invokes the Holy Spirit and bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ. Then Jesus feeds us just as he did with the crowds 2,000 years ago. In the Tabernacle we reserve the Body of Christ so that those who are ill and at home may receive the Eucharist as well.

Each Advent, we pray for Christ to come again. And at the end of time, when the Father decides the time is right, Jesus will come again for the second time. The souls of the just will be given a new body. Blindness, and deformity, and every other kind of disability that plagued the living will cease to exist. Those who have died in prior generations will receive new bodies as well. Purgatory will come to an end. As John tells us in the Book of Revelation, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, [for] the old order has passed away. The one who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new’” (21:1, 4-5). We are invited to the heavenly banquet.

The Second Coming is Good News for all who have followed Christ in this life and lived the best they could. There will also be justice for those who have rejected God. “The unfaithful, the depraved, murderers, the unchaste, sorcerers, idol-worshippers, and deceivers of every sort, their lot is in the burning pool of fire and sulfur, which is the second death” (Rev 21:8). Eternal punishment is a definite possibility, but it is not God’s desire. He died that we might be saved. He sacrificed his earthly life that we might know the joys of eternal life.

Our readings during Advent are a call to return to God if we have strayed. “Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths” (Mark 1:3). Nothing brings God greater joy than for the prodigal son to seek reconciliation. Each of us is in need of healing of some kind. We may not have a disability that is visible on the outside, but God reads our souls and knows what healing each of us needs. The Lord comes to save his people; let us acknowledge our need for healing and so prepare ourselves to meet Him.