

December 6, 2020 - 2nd Sunday of Advent
"Ignited by HOPE: CHRIST born anew in US"

Memory! The older I get the weaker the memory gets!
However, it is amazing that there are some things that still come to mind.

For instance, I can remember 64 years ago when I was a freshman in high school. It was a Jesuit high school in Chicago and we had a Fr. Whitehead - yes, he was actually a white-haired older fellow - trying to teach us Latin.

Latin? Yes, Latin.

He had a favorite phrase: "Repetitio est mater studiorum."

Repetition is the mother of learning!

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Now, as a much older fellow, I can grasp that with more understanding. When I first said "repetitio" you **heard** it, "repetitio".

When I explained that it meant "repetition" you **grasped** it.

"OK, I got it!"

Question: "But will you **remember** it?"

Question: "Will it have any **impact** on you?"

As a parent and a grand-parent I can just laugh and laugh.

How many times have we told a child "Cover your face if you are going to sneeze!"

Did they **hear** us?

Sure, they are not deaf!

Did they **grasp** it?

Sure, we showed them what we meant by putting our own arm over our faces!

Did they **remember**? Who knows!!

Did it have any **impact** on them?

Well, did they cover their faces?!?!?

What's the point of all this?

God has been speaking to humankind for thousands of years!

Have we humans been getting it?

Has it had an **impact** on us?
Let's look at today's readings and
see if there are any answers there.

In our first reading from Isaiah we have a classic line:

"A voice cries out:
'In the desert prepare the way of the Lord!
Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!'"

This all happened about 600 years before Christ.

The Israelites were being held captive in Babylon.
Isaiah was trying to **console** them, reminding them of God's place in
their lives, and telling them how God truly loved them.
This followed the earlier chapters [in the Book of Isaiah] where Isaiah
had been telling them to behave ... or the Lord would punish them.

I would say there was an **impact**.

It gave the Israelites captive in Babylon **HOPE!**
The Israelites held out; and after about 50 years in captivity they
were freed and they went back to Israel! Halleluiah!

Well, did they behave when they got back there?
In today's Gospel reading from the beginning of the Gospel of Mark we
get a bit of answer to that.

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:
Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you;
he will prepare your way.
A voice of one crying out in the desert:
"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths."

**John the Baptist appeared in the desert, proclaiming a
baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.**

No, they did not behave!

How about this for a coincidence?

In the year 1741 Handel wrote the famous "Messiah".
I know that music from the very special "Halleluiah Chorus."
The very beginning of the Messiah, however, starts with words
from the Old Testament.

From where!

Yes, the first 5 verses of today's Isaiah reading!

They are the first words of the very beginning of the whole Messiah!

There we go again: "***Repetition is the mother of learning.***"

Bringing these Scripture questions closer to home, in the Advent liturgical planning process here at Corpus Christi the team of people read the Scriptures and came up with our theme of "Ignited by **Hope**: CHRIST born anew in us."

Those planners went through that 4-step process.

Hear ... grasp ... remember ... impact!

So, where did they find the ideas for that theme?

Well, they concentrated their efforts on the Gospel readings for the four Sundays of Advent.

"Of course!", you say, "Christ is the ***good news*** of the Gospels!"

However, looking at those very first lines of Isaiah's (40:1-3) reading we see an abundance of **hope** spelled out so strongly:

**Comfort, give comfort to my people,
says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her
that her service is at an end, [hard service or warfare]
her guilt is expiated;
indeed, she has received from the hand of the LORD
double for all her sins.**

Oh, is there an echo in here?

"Repetition is the mother of learning!"

In the Gospel Mark describes John the Baptist's role:

**John the Baptist appeared in the desert
proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness
of sins.**

An ***almighty*** God can be understanding? Can be forgiving?

Wow, there is **hope** for us after all!

Hear - Grasp - Remember - Impact

Our Isaiah reading and the efforts of John the Baptist echo each other!

We **hear** the message twice.

How are we doing on **grasping**?

Is the message of forgiveness and hope clear enough to us that we will **remember** it?

BUT, most importantly, is there an **impact** on us?

Will it cause us to change something?

Will our thinking change?

Will it cause us to do something?

Well, here is another echo for us!

Perhaps we can recall Fr. Patrick's homily from last week.

He suggested that confession and penance fit so well here in the Advent season.

Is this a good **impact**?

Are we talking the Lord?

Are we owning up to our failures to do good works, our failures to follow the commandments to avoid all kinds of evil?

We have 20 days until Christmas.

How much time are we reflecting on the ups and downs of our lives?

How often have we spoken with God saying, "OK, Lord, I get it.

I own up to my failures.

You know I can do better.

OK ... I **hear** you... I **grasp** your wishes ... I am doing my best to

remember your wishes ... oh, what's the **impact** on me? In me?

OK ... I ... I ... really know I got to change.

I have the **HOPE** that you can help me make that change ... and keep that good habit ... for more than a day or two.

I have the **HOPE** that your aid will get me to keep that change all the way through next year ... and I **HOPE** even longer."