

Homily on Isa 2:2-5

December 4, 2017

Intro: The liturgical season of advent celebrates two comings of Jesus Messiah. From the first Sunday until Dec. 17, the emphasis is on Christ's second coming at the end of time, and from Dec. 17-24 the emphasis is on the Messiah's coming into our human history at Christmas. We tend to focus on the coming of Jesus at Christmas, but his coming at the end of time is the one which our liturgy asks us to look for and pray for. Note how often our Mass prayers use the phrase "Until he comes again."

This is the final vindication of all that we Christians suffer in a world torn by violence, injustice, and war. Finally, there will be a reign of perfect justice and peace. This hope is what keeps us from surrendering, keeps us going.

Isaiah's oracle in today's first reading is a perfect example of our lives today. He lived in a time of economic injustice: Israel in the north saw great expense for its continual wars, the buying up of small farms by large landowners, great disparity between the wealthy and the downtrodden poor, and a rejection of the cult of Yahweh in favor of the fertility gods who promised prosperity. Sound familiar? Isaiah saw many of these same dislocations in his own smaller land of Judah. And so his oracle is a message of hope for not only his own people but also for us, who suffer most of those same injustices today.

Isaiah has a vision of how Yahweh will put an end to Judah's troubles: "In days to come" signifies the climax of human history. Mount Zion on which the Temple rests, will be exalted as the highest mountain (higher than the mountains of Moab, which towered above the Temple mount; higher than Mt. Sinai on which the Jews had received the laws of the Covenant). All nations will come to Jerusalem seeking to trade with it, and once there they will be attracted by the ethical laws of the Jews. They will say, "Come, let's go up to the Temple of the God of Jacob, so that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in his paths." God will wield authority over the nations and lay down the law for many peoples. Then all nations will hammer their swords into plows, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift sword against nation; there will be no more training for war." Finally there will be one international law given by God and people will so live it that there will finally be peace on earth.

The last line tells us how this will happen: "O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!" If the Jews lived the law of the Lord, they would be such a light to the nations that all would become disciples of God and peace would at last come to earth.

The Meaning for us is if we Catholics really turned to Jesus' ways we would be so attractive to the rest of the world, from Jews to atheists, that there would be justice and peace on earth.

Jesus taught that amassing money is not the purpose of life. Power is not the purpose of life, and neither is fame, nor pleasure. Jesus taught us that we are children of a compassionate God and if we are compassionate as our heavenly father is compassionate, we will attain the happiness for which we were created. Our compassion is to be affected in the corporal works of mercy, which are the point, the meaning of our lives.

Many justify their votes for our present government by saying, "Politics is always dirty." That is simply wrong. God gave us government in 1 Sam 9 for our salvation, and Jesus never rejected legitimate government. At many times in our own American history we have seen government as an instrument of justice and peace for all peoples. God intends that besides living our own lives on the values of Jesus, we must infuse his values into our votes.

If we infused Jesus values into our votes, we would not be depriving 12 million people of affordable health care. We would not be taking money from the poor to give to the wealthy. We would not be bombing schools and hospitals. We would not be the only nation unwilling to preserve the ecology in which Jesus loved the birds of the air and the flowers of the field.

Our situation is that of Isaiah---a turning from the values God intends to values of personal prosperity and success. If we want our world to move towards the kingdom of God on earth, we must experience the conversion that John the Baptist asked of his listeners and Jesus now asks of his disciples. That is the task of Advent for each of us.

“O members of Jesus, fed by his Body and Blood, Come, let us walk in the ways of the Lord!”