

Homily of Second Sunday of Advent Year A, 2022

Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17; Romans 15:4-9; Matthew 3:1-12

Today, we light the second purple candle called the Candle of Peace. During the second week of our Advent journey, we pray for peace in our hearts, in our homes, in our communities, in our society, in our church, in our country, and in our world. Jesus Christ, whose birthday we are preparing to celebrate, is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). We pray for the conversion of those who cause violence in our society, and those who cause war in our world.

In the first reading, Prophet Isaiah presents an imagery of the harmony that exists where there is peace: "Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them. The cow and the bear shall graze, together their young shall lie down; the lion shall eat hay like the ox. The baby shall play by the viper's den, and the child lay his hand on the adder's lair. They shall not harm or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the Lord, as water covers the sea." The above imagery can be interpreted to mean that God has blessed us with different strengths, talents, gifts, charisms, temperaments, feelings, desires, colors, races, tribes, resources, and so on. Each of the blessings should be for helping, supporting, and building up of one another. God's blessings are never for harming or destroying others. Unfortunately, all around us, we experience the harm and the destruction done to humanity by human beings.

St. Paul prays for peace in the second reading, "May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think harmony with one another, in keeping with Jesus Christ, that with one accord you may with one voice glorify God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God." Note carefully the way St. Paul expresses the same message of peace: "think harmony," "with one accord," "with one voice," and "welcome one another."

In today's gospel, we read the prophecy of Isaiah about John the Baptist, "A voice of one crying out in the desert, prepare the way for the Lord, make straight his paths." Deserts are impassable due to thorns and thistles, hills and gullies, and sand and stones. Deserts do not have straight paths. To make a straight path, thorns and thistles need to be cleared, hills leveled, and gullies filled with sand and stones. In the same way, spiritual thorns and thistles, hills and gullies, sand and stones (our sins and sorrows) are a hindrance to the spiritual re-birth of Christ in us. Let us avail ourselves of the opportunities of Advent's spiritual exercises to prepare the way for the Lord and make straight his paths into our life.

For us, followers of Christ, let us not be distracted or carried away by the heightened social and commercial activities of Christmas celebration. Over and above the social and commercial activities are the spiritual benefits of Christmas, that is the re-birth of Christ in our life and the new persons we become as a result of the re-birth. If the spiritual benefits of Christmas preparation and celebration are excluded, the celebration loses its spiritual meaning and power.

John the Baptist says to us in the gospel, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" He adds, "Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance." Good fruit is the fruit of the Spirit which St. Paul teaches us in Galatians 5:22-23: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and self-control. May the grace of Advent season help us to bear lasting fruit of the Spirit. Amen.

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