

## 4th Sunday of Advent—Year A

The readings for today pick up again the theme of the “Coming of the King...” but in a way that asks us to examine our hearts to see if we are really getting ready to receive Him.

In the first reading from the Prophet Isaiah (7: 10-14) we have the familiar story about the Prophet’s confrontation with King Ahaz in Judah (circa 735–715 BC approximately). Judah is faced with an invasion by the Assyrians, and Ahaz believes that an alliance with Egypt is better than relying upon God and His promises to save Judah. In frustration, Isaiah gives Ahaz a “sign” that is so unusual it should have caused the king to take notice, but he refuses and plunges Judah into disaster. The essence of this story is that God’s plan will triumph in spite of mankind’s refusal to cooperate. This is also a veiled warning to us today to be careful about our relationships.

In the Responsorial Psalm the psalmist spells out the conditions that God expects of us presenting our worship to the King of all nations. Ascending the “mountain of the Lord” was the Jewish way of saying “Let us go to Jerusalem and its temple in order to worship the Lord of all creation.” It fits into our reading for this day because it asks us to prepare ourselves for the coming of the “King of all nations” at Christmas time.

The Second Reading is from St Paul’s letter to the Romans. In this opening passage and greeting, Paul lays out the whole purpose of his and our call as Christians, and that is “called to belong to Jesus Christ” and “called to holiness and apostleship” so that he and we might spread the name of Jesus and by doing so, bring others to believe.

Our Gospel from Matthew: God’s action is realized in the ‘YES’ of both Mary and Joseph. Let’s focus on Joseph and the road he travelled to arrive at his ‘yes’. Joseph’s hesitancy to be involved in God’s marvellous plan is due to his sense of propriety and obedience to God’s law as he was taught. To accept Mary, who is pregnant with a child not his own, is opposed to Jewish law. The prudent and kind thing to do is break the engagement and return to his quiet, peaceful, upright life. Joseph’s struggle can remind us of our own tendency to retain control over whatever happens in our lives, to cling to comfortable routines, to appear ‘proper’ rather than risk being involved in something bigger than ourselves.

Let’s look to Joseph who listened to God’s messenger angel and let his dreams for wholeness and love overrule his prudence, disappointment and confusion. Are we ready to let go of our shame, fear or need for excessive privacy to go the extra mile and become God’s saving presence in the world?

Here are some suggestions from Joseph’s angel: mend a quarrel... seek out a forgotten friend... share some treasure... give a ‘soft’ answer... encourage youth... keep a promise... find the time... forgive an enemy... listen... think first of someone else... express your gratitude... take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of Earth... be the first to seek reconciliation.

In these final days of preparation and anticipation, I invite you to act on one action above and become a co-creator with our God in helping to bring about GOD’S WAY of peace and justice.

*Fr Denes Ledeczi*

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