

2nd Sunday Advent Year “A”

Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

December 8, 2019

Readings: Isaiah 11:1-10; Romans 15:4-9; Matt. 3:1-12

St. John the Baptist probably felt very alone in his day, perhaps frustrated that so few people listened to him. St. Matthew clearly sees in the person of John the prophet about whom Isaiah had spoken in chapter 40 of that book. It is not intrinsic to the nature of a prophet that his message is either rejected outright or difficult beyond belief. While the prophets often were severe in their judgments about Israel, at other times were very comforting. They always sought to warn, to point beyond themselves to another.

The Church carries out a prophetic message equally valid in our time. Priests are co-workers with the bishops in the teaching office. It is the bishop alone who teaches in an official way as a member of the Magisterium. The teaching office of the Church, Magisterium, is directly willed by Christ, who desired to protect his flock.

“The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ.”¹

It is this Magisterium's task to preserve God's people from deviations and defections and to guarantee them the objective possibility of professing the true faith without error. It is a service to the truth, and in service to the Word of God, not above it.

You lay faithful also provide an indispensable role in bringing the Gospel to the daily circumstances of life, even pointing out your needs, cooperating “with their pastors in the service of the ecclesial community, for the sake of its growth and life.”²

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph # 85

² Ibid, paragraph # 910

I will illustrate using one example, one that every parent today knows all too well. Evil sneaks into the lives of our children by means of insidious uses of technology and parents must be both vigilant and educated. I myself would fail miserably in this respect because I am not sufficiently up to speed on the myriad ways in which technology is able to be monitored, used and misused.

Technology is morally neutral; it is all in how it is used. Evil by its very nature is insidious. It lures us in, it presents itself as tasty, even innocuous, until it completely grabs hold and the damage has been done. The scourge of pornography amongst our young people is truly frightening, even if it is not limited to them.

We pastors must call it out and impress upon the faithful that this is a serious sin against chastity, no matter what your state in life. St. John the Baptist preached a message many did not want to hear. He called people to repentance, but his own manner of living only highlighted the radical nature of his teaching. He always pointed to Christ, never to himself. There was love beneath the hard teaching. The message was never about himself, but he pointed to the Truth.

Our response is not one retreat or still less surrender, but one of engagement with the evil by means of shining the light of Truth on anything and everything in our modern world. Our issues today are not the same as they were a generation ago, but the Gospel is the same, and it is brought to bear in the modern world.

It is based on the conviction that the real light in the world is found in the person of Jesus Christ and so his winnowing fan will clear the way, separating the wheat from the chaff. The chaff is the seed coverings and other debris separated from the seed in threshing grain, and it will be burned with unquenchable fire.