

Second Sunday of Advent (12/7/08)

The readings for Advent are filled with hope for the coming of the Messiah to make all creation new. Isaiah uses beautiful poetic images to convey this to the people during their captivity in Babylon. Jerusalem's guilt is expiated and now the Lord will renew the earth and reveal His glory to the world through the renewed and recreated Jerusalem. This does not mean that only the buildings but the people themselves will be renewed and become faithful witnesses to the ends of the earth.

Re-creation is also the theme in the second reading. New heavens and a new earth will be formed when the day of the Lord comes. We are reminded that God's time is not our time, and all that has been prophesied will certainly come to pass. In the gospel we are introduced to the vibrant figure of John the Baptist who will prepare the way of the Lord by his call to repentance. Repentance is always the precursor to the coming of the Lord, whether in world history or in our own personal history. Repentance purifies our hearts and prepares us for receiving the Lord. We will be "baptized" again with the fire of the Holy Spirit that will enable us to be more faithful witnesses to the world. This witness will draw more people to God and His offer of salvation. Let us praise the Lord! Amen.

Third Sunday of Advent (12/14/08)

Isaiah continues his vision of the divine restoration of Israel and God's faithful people. The people will be freed from their captivity in Babylon and allowed to return to Jerusalem and begin the task of rebuilding the Temple and their lives. All of this is a continuation of the redemptive work of God first shown in the Exodus from Egypt. But the release from physical slavery is only the forerunner of the release from spiritual slavery, the slavery to sin. Paul's reading reminds us that having been released from slavery to sin we should give thanks to the Lord always and pray without ceasing, both in word and action.

John the Baptist is a major figure in Advent. John's gospel makes it clear that the Baptist was not the messiah, which some of his followers wanted to believe, but that his purpose was to testify to the light. And the light was Christ, who would not be recognized by all the people because he did not fulfill their expectations. Post 1st century, we understand far better who Jesus was and is. But does He meet our expectations? Do we pre-judge who we want Jesus to be, do we make Jesus into our image, instead of letting Him be the revelation of God's love and obedience? Let us open our hearts this Advent to the wonder of God's infinite plan of salvation for the world and for each one of us. Amen!

Fourth Sunday of Advent (12/21/08)

The 4th Sunday of Advent brings us closer to the promise God made to King David for an everlasting Kingdom. God has a special place in His heart for David and promises him that He will build a place for David to rest. It will be his son Solomon who will build the Temple to worship God. This is also a period of transition for Israel from being a nomadic people to a people with a fixed home where they can establish roots.

The Annunciation to Mary is one of the pivotal events in human history. Her initial confusion gives way to a dramatic “YES” to be God’s servant, and thus paves the way for the coming of Jesus. Jesus brings God’s infinite love for His people into a world of darkness, confusion, and misunderstanding. The darkness is the deliberate turning away from God, the confusion comes from good people who do not recognize the power of sin and fall prey to the delusions of sin. As we approach the Birthday of the Lord, let us remember with joyful hearts that Jesus is the light in the darkness and teaches us through the Church how to fight the confusion of evil and rejoice in the knowledge of God’s love for us.