

2nd Sunday of Advent (C)
St. Athanasius and St. Francis Parishes
December 5, 6, 2015

I am not a scholar in Greek and Hebrew, so I use homily resources to help me with interesting aspects of Scripture that can make a difference in how one understands a particular Scripture passage. Such was the case with the Scriptures for today. There was no way I would have known that the words “your” and “you” in today's readings are the plural forms of those words. That fact, along with other indications scattered throughout today's readings, indicate that all three writers are addressing the people as a community, as a group. Baruch, Paul and Luke all make 'corporate proclamations'. Preparation for the coming of the Lord is not simply an individual task, though to prepare individually is important and necessary. The fact is, there is an important ecclesial dimension to these Scriptures, in which the entire people of God await Christ's coming. Together we prepare together we wait for what God will do for us together we act to make God known to the world around us.

In thinking about this I was reminded of much of what Pope Francis said to us when he made his pilgrimage here this past September. In at least a couple of his main speeches, he addressed us as a people, not as individuals, but as an entire nation of people. I looked again at what he said to Congress. His closing words there were:

“In particular, I would like to call attention to those family members who are the most vulnerable, the young. For many of them, a future filled with countless possibilities beckons, yet so many others seem disoriented and aimless, trapped in a hopeless maze of violence, abuse and despair. Their problems are our problems. We cannot avoid them We need to face them together, *(Pope Francis then referred again to the liberty, dreams, justice, dialogue and peace that 4*

Americans

exhibited Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton.)
(then he continued ...) In these remarks I have sought to present some of the richness of your cultural heritage, of the spirit of the American people. It is my desire that this spirit continue to develop and grow, so that as many young people as possible can inherit and dwell in a land which has inspired so many people to dream.”

Individually you may be preparing spiritually for Christmas. You may be using the Little Blue Book that was given to you a couple of weekends ago. You may be thinking of who in your family, neighborhood, and even at work needs some particular attention, some kindness. Maybe you are working with a Food Bank, with SVDP, or ringing a bell for the Salvation Army. Hopefully, you are also thinking of when you will celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to Christmas.

Returning to our Scriptures for today, and the fact that we have heard 'corporate proclamations' to entire nations and communities of people, what might preparation for the coming of the Lord as a parish look like

We hear in both today's First Scripture and in today's Gospel, "*Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. Make the mountains and the hills low, fill in the valleys. Make rough roads smooth, and winding roads straight.*" Actually, we are to lay out the red carpet for the Lord who is coming! What can a parish do to prepare? To lay out the red carpet, the welcome mat?

Some of my ideas are spiritual and material

Advent Wreath at home it can be simple, and maybe not even a wreath, but simply an evergreen sprig or bough with 4 small candles. But light it, pray for what you hope for in terms of peace, holiness as a world and as a family.

One decade of the Rosary each day do the Joyful Mysteries ... they all relate really well to the coming Incarnation Mystery at Christmas: Annunciation, Visitation, Birth of Jesus, Presentation and Finding of Jesus in Temple

February is our parish's month to provide the peanut butter for the Backpack Program in the Jesup area. These are given to free-and reduced lunch children for the weekend. Food Bank is Waterloo provides the substance of food, and Jesup churches provide peanut butter and a bread coupon redeemable at Kwik-Star.

Independence Area Food Pantry currently they need Pancake Mix and Oatmeal. (any kind, any size)

I SUGGEST THAT WE BRING OATMEAL, PANCAKE MIX, AND PEANUT BUTTER THE NEXT 2 WEEKENDS OF ADVENT. IF YOU BRING OTHER ITEMS WE CAN ADD IT TO THE K OF C CARE AND SHARE EFFORT. We can lay out a welcome mat for at least a few children/families.

Go to Busted Halo on the web. Just google it, and you will find an on-line retreat, a rather surprising/clever Advent Calendar.

Use the Little Blue Book, the prayer suggestions that came to you in the Advent and Christmas mailing of a couple weeks ago.

Greet others by name at Mass. Saying, "Hello, John" seems so much more welcoming than "Hello" or "Hi"

Finally, what can we do to make the Christmas Mass attendees feel welcome?

Don't come early to stake out your place and then make people crawl over you

Sing, Sing, Sing, (practice doing it these next 3 weeks ... begin today) When I walk into a Church and see only a minority who even pick up their song books, I am not all that excited about returning there. Be engaged in the celebration.

The day is coming! Our redemption is near at hand!