

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Sep 30th 2013

“Old men and old women will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of old age. The City will be filled with boys and girls playing in the streets.” Zech. 8: 4-5

Today’s readings begin with the prophet Zechariah, who speaks forth a vision of restoration in which God’s people are rescued from exile and brought home to dwell with God. I am struck by the vision of this restored city where God dwells with his people. The old men and women sitting in the streets are delighted to be there. They may need their staff in hand, but they do not tire of enjoying those children who are playing nearby. This is a portrait of a healthy culture, in which young and old dwell together, rather than separated.

My wife and I have the honor of having very old parents. This past weekend, they attended our daughter’s wedding. Our parents felt the honor of sitting (some with staff in hand) and taking in the vista of their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren making merry together at this event. Although the world around us may be in turmoil, for this day, our little part of the world stood still for a time and we took it all in together. Our God dwelt with us not only in the sacraments inside the church, but every bit as much thereafter as we celebrated and left that place to live and grow, young and old together.

The promise of God coming to dwell among us has been realized in part, but it is also yet to come in the fullness envisioned by the prophet. There are times when we feel pressed on every side. And we long for this protection, for this rescue from the land of rising and setting suns to which Zechariah refers, and for all the challenges we must overcome.

Today’s Gospel also speaks of the significance of children in the context of disciples bickering over who is great and who is less great. We live in a culture where children are not valued as they ought to be. Some look at them as an inconvenient burden, to be avoided if possible, forgetting that all of us began in that state. But in clamoring for other things we desire, grasping for our own greatness and satisfaction, there is neglect of the most precious gift, in which we also find the heart of God.

The Gospel tells us that “Jesus realized the intention of [the disciples’] hearts.” So, when Jesus looks at the intention of our hearts, what does he see? This is a good question to ponder.

Let us pray for our culture, for our church, and for our friends and neighbors to embrace and grow a culture of life, protecting all human life from conception to natural death. Let us also embrace the old men and old women in our lives and honor them. They are witnesses to God's faithfulness, just as the young are beacons of God's promises of hope for the future. And let us consider the possibility that God may also feel the delight and satisfaction of witnessing the progress and love of his children as he dwells among them, much like our very old parents. Thanks be to God.

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