

## Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Dec 13th 2013

### Memorial of St. Lucy

During Advent we focus on the first reading. As you read this, I'm sure that in your email inbox, pop-up ads and billboards are reminding you that there are only 11 more shopping days until Christmas. Of course, the commercialization of Christmas is an easy target. But there's nothing wrong with exchanging gifts with loved ones and friends and looking forward to connecting with people whom we love. I like that part of Christmas as much as the next person.

If you're taking the time to read these online reflections, you certainly don't need a lecture from me about the real message of Christmas. You know what it is.

All of which leads to today's slight puzzle of the first reading. It seems a little bit as if God is bartering with his people. Follow my commandments and all sorts of good material things will happen. You will be prosperous, you will be vindicated (presumably against the charges of your enemies) and your genes will be spread far and wide. Of course this was written for a time when people saw the reward for following God as being mostly in this life, and if bad things happened to a person they were the result of some sin — or even sins of their ancestors.

We are past that way of thinking now (or we should be). All of us know wonderful, faithful people who have had bad fortune with their health or what have you, and watched people whom we don't admire seemingly have everything good this earth has to offer come their way. So when the first reading speaks of "prosperity" it's not referring to your bank account. It means the sort of prosperity that comes from having as pure of a soul as you can have. When it speaks of "vindication" it's heavenly not earthly vindication.

So when you're shopping for those last minute gifts do a little shopping for your soul. I will try to do the same.

Patrick Borchers