

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Dec 6th 2016

Today's first reading is from the Book of Isaiah and provides us with a meaningful message during this season of Advent. Isaiah 40 begins as the people of Judah are in captivity in Babylon around 550-540 BC. As exiles, they understood their failure to live as God's people in the past and genuinely questioned their status with God in the present and future. However, God pardons them for their sins. A voice then cries out that they should prepare the way of the Lord so that he may be revealed in all of his glory and splendor to them; much like we are doing for Advent. The passage concludes with a celebration of the good news of our Lord; a Lord that is truly active in the lives of his people and, like a shepherd, shows compassion, care, and loyalty to his flock.

As Christmas approaches, Advent (which in Latin is "ad-venire" or "to come to") provides us all with an opportunity to come to or prepare ourselves for the celebration of the birth of Jesus. Although naturally, but also unfortunately, we are focused on preparing for the holiday season by putting up lights, decorating the Christmas tree, and buying presents, Advent should, more importantly, provide us with the opportunity to bask in God's forgiveness and to prepare our hearts and minds for Christ. Although each of us may certainly prepare in his or her own way, my hope this Advent season is to prepare for Christ by following the Jesuit practice of being a contemplative in action. I hope to pause and to reflect daily about my experiences and whether they truly glorify God. And, yes, I know I will fall short, but I want my reflection to guide my day-to-day activities and, more importantly, my life. What did I learn and how may this information best guide me in my activities and interactions with others? Especially important to me during this post-election season is to follow our Lord's example of being a shepherd who shows compassion, care, empathy, and tolerance to a diverse society of fellow human beings and to go out of my way to advocate and to serve those most in need. I hope each of us takes the time to reflect and then to act in a manner that allows us to prepare and "to come to" our God through the celebration of Christ's birth.

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