

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Dec 14th 2017

Memorial of Saint John of the Cross, Priest and Doctor of the Church

As I read and pray with the readings for today I see the theme of “the kingdom of God”. In the season of Advent we are reminded that Jesus came to invite us into the kingdom of God through the incarnation. During Advent my prayer consists of phrases like, “Come Lord Jesus” and ”O Come, O Come Immanuel”. For me it is a time to pray for God to fill my heart. Then I am able to respond with courage and love when Jesus says to me, “Come, follow me” (Mt 4:19). The readings we hear throughout the rest of the year about the life and ministry of Jesus echo this continual call of Jesus to “Come, follow me.”

The first reading from Isaiah reminds me of God’s generosity and willingness to give the people of Israel all that they need, including the mercy and kindness referred to in the psalm. Israel is striving to be a great nation and kingdom at this time in history and these words from God remind them that they cannot do this on their own. It is God that helps them be a great nation. I can identify with the people of Israel who desire great things but easily forget that God is the giver of all good gifts. In the first reading it is obvious that God seeks to assist, to help and to give good gifts. God is saying, “Fear not”, I want good for you. I trust that God wants good for all of us. Advent is a time to remember the ultimate good gift God has given us all which is the gift of his son, Jesus. Through him we have our entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

In the gospel reading from Matthew we hear Jesus talk about the “Kingdom of heaven” in reference to John the Baptist. Jesus says, “among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist”, but goes on to say, “yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” The Catholic Study Bible suggests that the meaning of this statement by Jesus is that the greatness of John the Baptist lies in his role as the one who announces the kingdom of heaven. The message I heard in this is the invitation to be like John and to boldly invite others to enter the kingdom of heaven. By being a part of the kingdom of heaven we too find our greatness.

Kathy Martin-Creighton University's Campus Ministry