

2nd Sunday of Advent – B - 2008

LESSON: God Never Forgets about Us

All of us have experienced **pessimistic moments**.

- ✍ Sometimes we experience pessimism because no matter what we do we can't seem to **avoid suffering**; painful things just **keep happening** to us and those we love.
- ✍ Sometimes we experience **discouragement** because we can't seem to **avoid sin**; we just keep falling into the **same** patterns of greed, lust, impatience, and laziness.
- ✍ Sometimes we experience **cynicism** when we look at society and see so much that is **wrong**, so much **injustice**, degradation, violence, and a lack of respect for the gift of life.

Today, as we start the Second week of Advent, **God has something to say** about pessimism, discouragement, and cynicism.

He is saying: pessimism, discouragement, cynicism will all come **knocking** at your door, but **don't let them in!**

Do not **let yourself** be afraid, because I am your Lord and Savior, and **I have not forgotten about you!**

This is the message

- ✍ of the **Gospel**, where we hear St John the Baptist's voice ring out with **hope** in the wilderness of pessimism: **the Lord is coming!**
- ✍ This is the message of **Isaiah**, who preaches **comfort** to God's sinful people, reminding them that he is like a shepherd who **gathers the lambs** of his flock (us) in his arms.
- ✍ This is the message of the Second Reading from St. Peter: even if it **seems** that God is **absent**, has **forgotten** about us, or is **powerless** to help us, we know that he is simply **waiting for the right moment** to send in his grace.
- ✍ St. Peter reminds us in that reading that for God, a thousand years are like a **day**, and a day is like **a thousand years**; what *seems* like a **long wait** for us is in reality just the **blink of an eye**.

Advent is our yearly reminder that **God has not forgotten about us**, no matter how we may feel – but faith is not about feeling – faith is about **HOPE** and **TRUST** in the Promises of God.

Our coming celebration of Christmas is the reminder that God's promise to save us from pessimism and discouragement and cynicism **took flesh** in the Person of Jesus Christ.

In fact, Advent is the reminder that God **never stops** thinking of us, and he is **leading us with care** to our everlasting reward.

ILLUSTRATION – My Retreat This Year

God **does** lead us and gather us, just as the shepherd leads his flock – but to be gathered and led, we first have to **recognize** the Shepherd, and **then, follow** Him.

This is one of the things that God led me to pray about during my retreat this past week. I had wanted to read St. Paul (since it is the Year of St. Paul), but God was leading me in a different direction so that I could discover again, and proclaim (like John the Baptist) that God is **always** calling us to follow him, **always** gathering us into His Body, the Church, **always** inviting us back, even when we have wandered away due to our own sinfulness...

On October 5, 1938, a young religious by the name Sister Faustina Kowalska died in a convent of the Congregation of Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Cracow, Poland. She came from a very poor family that had struggled hard on their little farm during the terrible years of WWI. St. Faustina had had only three years of very simple education. Hers were the humblest of tasks in the convent, usually in the kitchen or the vegetable garden.

But On February 22, 1931, Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ began appearing to this simple nun, bringing with Him a wonderful message of God's faithfulness and of His Divine Mercy for all people. Saint Faustina tells us in her diary under this date:

"In the evening, when I was in my cell, I became aware of the Lord Jesus clothed in a white garment. One hand was raised in blessing, the other was touching the garment at the breast. From the opening of the garment at the breast there came forth two large rays, one red and the other pale. In silence I gazed intently at the Lord; my soul was overwhelmed with fear, but also with great joy. After a while Jesus said to me, 'paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the inscription: Jesus, I trust in You.'" (I've placed this image here in the sanctuary this weekend.)

Some time later, Our Lord again spoke to her:

"The pale ray stands for the Water which makes souls righteous; the red ray stands for the Blood which is the life of souls. These two rays issued forth from the depths of My most tender Mercy at that time when My agonizing Heart was opened by a lance on the Cross....Fortunate is the one who will dwell in their shelter, for the just hand of God shall not lay hold of him."

Why would Christ emphasize in our time a doctrine, the Divine Mercy? In His revelations to St. Faustina Jesus answers this question, connecting it to another doctrine, that of His Second Coming (which we recall during this first part of Advent): Jesus' first coming was in humility, as a Servant, to free the world from sin, but He promised to return in glory to judge the world on love. In between these Comings we have the end times or era of the Church, in which the

Church ministers reconciliation to the world until the great and terrible Day of the Lord, the Day of Justice. Every one of us, as Catholics, should be familiar with the teaching of the Church. Only in the context of public revelation as taught by the Magisterium can we situate the words of private revelation given to Sr. Faustina when He said to her:

- ✍ You will prepare the world for My final coming. (*Diary* 429)
- ✍ Speak to the world about My mercy ... It is a sign for the end times. After it will come the Day of Justice. While there is still time, let them have recourse to the fountain of My mercy. (*Diary* 848)
- ✍ Tell souls about this great mercy of Mine, because the awful day, the day of My justice, is near. (*Diary* 965).
- ✍ I am prolonging the time of mercy for the sake of sinners. But woe to them if they do not recognize this time of My visitation. (*Diary* 1160)
- ✍ Before the Day of Justice, I am sending the Day of Mercy. (*Diary* 1588)
- ✍ He who refuses to pass through the door of My mercy must pass through the door of My justice. (*Diary* 1146).

Do we find ourselves pessimistic? Are we discouraged by our own lack of faithfulness and tendency to sin? Are we just cynical people who think nothing will ever change? Do we doubt that God is even with us or that He really guides and gathers us?

Then COME experience His Divine Mercy! God **WAITS** for you each week in the confessional. Come and know His presence in your life – allow Him to gather you as His flock – before the “terrible day of His justice” arrives.

St. Peter reminded us that “the day of the Lord will come like a thief...and the earth and everything done on it will be found out.” Does that scare you? It **certainly** scares me – that **everything** will be found out. Oh, how I **need** God’s Divine and loving Mercy in my life.

APPLICATION: St Peter's Advent Formula

Devotion to the Divine Mercy is just one more example of God’s faithfulness to us – that He has **not** forgotten us in our misery and sin – and He never will.

Knowing this led St. Peter to ask in today's Second Reading, "What sort of persons ought you to be?"

Pessimistic, discouraged, and cynical? **Not at all!**

St Peter gives us **two qualities** that should mark the life of **every Christian**. And perhaps **going to the next level** in these two qualities should be our spiritual project for Advent.

First, St. Peter says, our lives should be marked by **holiness**.

- ✍ The Greek word is "anastrophe" [an-ass-troh-FAY], and it refers directly to our **behavior, to how we act.**
- ✍ Holiness doesn't mean that we go around with our heads **in the clouds;**
- ✍ holiness means that we go around **as Christ went around,**
- ✍ treating other people with **sincere respect,**
- ✍ and looking for opportunities **to do good** to those around us.
- ✍ And when we have failed, (even in small matters) it means coming to Christ in confession to experience once again His loving Divine Mercy.

Second, St. Peter says our lives should be marked by **devotion.**

- ✍ The Greek word is "eusebia" (you-SEE-bee-uh], and it refers **not** to our actions, but to the fundamental **attitude underlying** our actions.
- ✍ This should consist of **joyful reverence** towards God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Guide in all things.
- ✍ Devotion isn't just a matter of **saying a lot of prayers;**
- ✍ it's a matter of living at all times in a personal, intimate **relationship with Jesus Christ;**
- ✍ that's what prayer is meant to **foster.**
- ✍ To make that **possible** is the reason Jesus came to earth in the first place.
- ✍ This is the attitude and disposition that regular Sacramental confession restores to our lives.

In this Mass God gives us yet **another reminder** that he hasn't forgotten about us – as he comes to us in the humble form of bread and wine in Holy Communion.

When he offers Himself to us to nourish our souls in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, let's ask him to show us how,

- ✍ we can grow in **holiness** in our interaction with others,
- ✍ and grow in **devotion** in our relationship with him.
- ✍ and experience His Divine Mercy, so that we **don't** experience His terrible justice.

Let's come to Him, and allow Him to "gather us together, as the shepherd gathers his flock." Let's remember that Christ's has not forgotten us – but came in Bethlehem to take away our pessimism, discouragement and cynicism – and that He will come again "like a thief" in the night. What sort of persons do you want to be when Christ comes – both at the end of time **and** when He comes in Holy Communion here at this Mass?