

*Our Lady of Lourdes*

Third Sunday of Advent

December 12, 2009

Fr. Bob

Readings:

Zephaniah 3:14-18

Philippians 4:4-7

Luke 3:10-18

Our readings today can provide for us an examination of conscience. An examination of our lives in the context of our creator. Questions for us that are important, to give the right context to the feast we are waiting to celebrate at Christmas, the coming of God into the world two thousand years ago, and the coming of God that we still keep vigil for.

John was baptizing in the Jordan and was attracting crowds who were curious, who were searching, and some who were probably desperate. He was asked a basic question of the people who had come to the Jordan to listen and to be baptized, waiting for their messiah to come. They came to John with the question of what they should do. What should they do to get ready for their king. And to each, John's basic question was the same, although the results varied with each person. The coming of the kingdom meant that it would be a kingdom ruled with justice. The justice of God. And the justice that was expected of people in all walks of life.

They were hoping that he was someone important, like Elijah, or a prophet or the Messiah. Instead, his answer must have been a disappointment. He assured them that he was none of those people, when he said, in another Gospel account, that he was a voice of one crying out in the desert, "make straight the way of the Lord." A voice of one. A man on a lonely mission, just one voice, trying to get people ready for the coming of their Messiah. That's what he was doing when he was baptizing those who came to him so that they could acknowledge their sinfulness and, in faith, have their sins washed away. What he was also telling them was that there was a demand. To be part, they had to act justly in all things.

And so the questions are also put to us today. What are we doing, in this world, to keep ourselves ready and to act justly. In the Gospel, whoever had two cloaks, should be willing to give up one to someone in need. The tax collectors had their own answer: to only charge what was right and just. And to the soldiers: not to take advantage of their position and their power. Our readings today, provide a framework for our own reflection on what we need to be doing. It starts with the reading from Isaiah, urging us to remember the blessings that have been given. "The king of Israel, the Lord is in your midst, you have no further misfortune to fear."

The Lord coming into our midst, means that we have been blessed by the Lord of all creation, and with it, the possibility for our realizing what his power can do for us if we only turn to him. We're told by Isaiah that he can convert us, change us. Just as he is able to renew creation. We can look to others, we can be guided, but for each of us, we have to remember what God has done for us, and we have to commit ourselves to him, and to no one else.

And as Paul tells us in our reading, to get ready means having the right attitude. "To rejoice in the Lord always. By prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God." A spirit of rejoicing, not lamenting. A spirit of thanksgiving, which helps us to see possibilities. Rejoicing and thanksgiving, not fear and dread, are qualities to help us face the future as we await the coming of the Lord, already in our midst, and destined to come again in all his fullness.