

December 2, 2018

Jer 33:14-16; 1 Thes 3:12-4:2; Lk 21:25-28,34-36

Mass Reflection:

After our gifts have been prepared, after all the people have asked for the sacrifice at the priest's hands - to be accepted by the Lord, we enter the Eucharistic Prayer. This great prayer of thanksgiving begins with a dialogue between the priest and the people where we lift up our hearts and prepare to give the thanks to God that it is only right and just that we offer. The prayer that follows changes at different times and seasons and contains wonderful descriptions of parts of our faith. Listen to it, soak in the wisdom of the words, they help to focus on the great mystery we are to celebrate in the Eucharist, and also the mysteries that we remember at various points in the church year. At the end of this prayer, as we are entering into the special presence of God in Jesus Christ that will transform our offerings into Jesus' Body and Blood, we join the angels in their prayer to God. This is direct quotation of the prayer of the angels found in Isaiah and Revelation and also contains a line from Matthew's Gospel spoken by the people welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem. It is a fitting prayer as we move to enter into the presence of God where the angels always are, and welcome Jesus into our presence. Let us pray it with devotion before we kneel to wait God's special entry into our assembly.

Homily:

We can have trouble waiting. Sometimes the trouble is that we are looking forward to what is coming so much that the time seems to drag along. Other times the thing we're waiting for is something that we'd rather avoid and we sit in the anxiety worrying about it. I have had both types of experiences in this past week. Something I ordered online is late arriving and I keep checking to see if it is here - time is dragging along; and I had to have a conversation this week that could have gone badly - so I was anxious about it. Jesus wants us to not have anxiety about waiting - not about items from e-bay, not about anticipated problems in life - and not about our later encounter with him.

We begin Advent today. This is a special time of waiting where we look forward to the coming of Jesus. We look forward to Christmas where we celebrate Jesus' first coming to earth, and remember that he will come again. In Christmas we celebrate the coming that was spoken about in the first reading: *The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah.* God fulfills the promise to provide a king whose kingdom will ever end, a king unlike every king before him. People in Jesus' time expected a great warrior king who would come in power with an army in tow. The King does arrive, but his power is not what people expected. He did come and he was worshiped by kings of the earth, and he set things right in a way no-one expected. He comes not as great warrior with an army behind him, but as a little baby - and he shows us a whole new way to live, a whole new way to think, so that we can have less anxiety as we wait for his next coming.

Jesus will come again to the world in a more openly powerful way than the first time - he says today: *And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.* Besides this coming, we will all meet him instantly at our deaths - where in God's timeless existence he is already reigning in power. Some people just reduce their anxiety for this meeting by thinking everyone will go to heaven, no matter what - not at all what Jesus says in several places - or thinking that we are all set with God no matter what, not what we hear in scripture either. Ignoring is not a solution nor is being scared and afraid. ... Let's look at the way Jesus teaches us to not be in anxiety about the events of daily life and to not be worried for his own coming to us and to the world.

In advent we focus on the coming of Jesus into the world that happened not with flashes of light or a great noise but with the shining of a single star and the gentle cooing of a baby. Jesus presents himself to us to accept in this way, to let down our guard, to open our hearts to his words - to let go of our pride and frustration, and all those things that causes us to act in defensive and uncaring ways to others. Do not be fooled that the gentleness of the baby is weakness, that little baby is the most powerful being in the universe. Jesus calls us to not be so attached to the passing things of the world, he calls us to trust in his power to intervene in a stressful situation and transform it mysteriously by love. God took care of both situations I mentioned, and I was left wondering: "what was I so worried about." It is the attitude of peaceful waiting, detachment, and love that brings down our anxiety in this life and makes us holy before God - frustrated waiting makes us angry and resentful for what we don't have, or vengeful and unloving in our heart in a conflict. We heard in the second reading: *May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus.*

If we can accept in peace the first coming of Jesus and let that gentle presence melt the hardness of our heart - like the look from a baby can melt our hearts; if we can adopt the attitude of Jesus that we don't need to use anger, frustration, force, and aggression to be powerful; if we can let go of the material, the competitive, and the worldly; if we can let love be the guiding principle in our life -then we can meet Jesus without anxiety. We will not only have reduced our anxiety in life, but our attitude will have let Jesus transform our hearts and put us right with God. Advent calls us to get on board and do this without delay, as Jesus says to us today: *Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a trap.* Jesus is coming, let's get ready to meet him.