

Reflection for the 2nd Sunday of Advent

Today on December 6, 2020 we celebrate the Second Sunday of Advent and in our Gospel Reading, taken from the Gospel of Mark we are introduced to the last of the Prophets, St. John the Baptist. He is the bridge between the Old and the New Testament, the one who informs the world that the Messiah is at hand. The other 27 Prophets are found in the Old Testament, and some of them are mentioned and quoted in the New Testament the most notable would be Isaiah, who is quoted in today's Gospel Reading. Of course it is important to note that some sources would claim that there are as many as 88 Prophets in the Bible. The challenge or issue is who is a Prophet and how does one define what it means to be a Prophet?

The Hebrew Prophet was not merely a person enlightened by God to foretell events, rather he was the interpreter of God, who had been supernaturally enlightened and sent by God to communicate His will and designs to His people, Israel. The Hebrew Prophet was not just someone that foretold the future but was also called upon to remind God's People to stay true to their Covenant with Him. The concept of a person such as a Prophet that is a mediator between God and humanity is not only found in the Jewish Faith. Christianity accepts all the Prophets found in the Hebrew Bible and many Christian Scholars would assert that St. John the Baptist is the last Prophet for the Holy Spirit uses him to conclude speaking through the Prophets, John completes the cycle of the Prophets that began with Elisha. Prophets are also found in Islam and Hinduism, just to name two other faiths that embrace the concept of a mediator between God and humanity. In the Jewish and Christian faiths there is also the understanding that Angels are also messengers sent by God to communicate with His People.

As Catholics we can see God communicating with us as individuals and as a Community in a number of ways, and not just through Prophets and Angels, but also through the Sacraments, the traditions of our Faith, the teachings of our Faith, the Magisterium of the Church, private prayer, and Sacred Scriptures. Because there are so many ways that God can and does speak to us, it should be the norm that a message from God is repeated in countless ways. We can determine, to some degree, if the message that we have received is from God by looking for the message that we have received to be conveyed to us in a number of ways and a number of times. God is not going to limit the number of times that we will receive a message from Him; in fact He is going to confirm His message over and over again.

On this Second Sunday of Advent as we continue our Joyful Journey of preparation for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, this Season and this Sunday reminds us of the type of relationship God wishes to have with us. Our God is not the absentee landowner that goes on a trip and then later returns to take an accounting of things. The God we have is wishing to be with us as we take every step in this world. He has given us free will and we can choose not to follow Him and to go our own way. It is important to note that our God is reaching out to us every moment of our lives. This Sunday as we hear the words *"behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. A voice of one crying out in the desert; prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths."* This statement found in both our First Reading, and Gospel Reading this Sunday is informing us that God has sent the final Prophet to inform the world that the Messiah is coming and now is the time to prepare. The constant message of the Advent Season is to prepare, may we not just hear this message of Advent but may we act on this message.