

December 15, 2013 – 3rd Sunday in Advent – Year A
Messiah & Patience

Today's readings take us two different directions.

The Isaiah reading and the Gospel speak of the Messiah

The St. James reading hits us with the theme of patience.

Let's start with Isaiah and the Messiah.

How are your Jesse tree study, prayer and discussion going this Advent?

Let's look at the Jesse tree and, specifically, at the panel for the 3rd Sunday Advent.

The panel has the candle and rose.

They symbolize the Prophet Isaiah who lived about 700 years before Christ.

[The Isaiah panel is in the third row just to the left of the King Solomon Temple image as you can see on the wall here.]

The book of the Prophet Isaiah in the Bible is quite long.

It has been given the nickname of "The Fifth Gospel" because it so often refers to the coming Messiah.

For example, in today's Isaiah reading the prophet speaks of some future time when the Lord will lead the Israelites through a new Exodus and they will be redeemed or ransomed.

At that time even the desert will bloom.

As today's reading tells us, the desert will bloom like the area called Sharon a coastal land which is very moist and rich with vegetation.

That's one reason for using the rose on the Isaiah panel on the Jesse tree.

The candle on the Isaiah panel is a typical symbol for the Messiah,

"the light of the world", the Messiah who is Jesus.

Today's Isaiah reading continues and goes on to tell us what it will be like when the Messiah comes.

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall see,
and the ears of the deaf be opened;

6 Then the lame shall leap like a stag,
and the mute tongue sing for joy.

[Display the first prop with those four key words]

We can see that the Messiah will be quite a phenomenal person to make all these things happen.

This leads us right to today's Gospel where John the Baptist inquires about Jesus.

Is Jesus the Messiah?

Jesus does not answer with any speech or claims.

He simply lets the facts speak for themselves.

And, what are those facts?

[Display the second prop]

As Jesus replies to the disciples of John the Baptist:

- The blind see
- The lame walk
- Those with leprosy (a skin disease) are healed
- The deaf hear
- The dead are raised from the dead
- The poor have to Gospel preached to them.

We can remember those healings told in the Gospels.

- Jesus rubbing mud on the blind man's eyes (John 9:1-2)
- The man on the stretcher let through a hole in the roof and then carrying out his very own stretcher (Mark 2:1-12)
- The ten lepers all cured but only one came back (Luke 17:11-19)
- The deaf being cured (Mark 7:31-37)
- The mute being able to speak again. (Matt 9:32-33)
- **Three** people raised from the dead: the young girl (Luke 8:40-56); the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-17) ; and "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:1-44)

So, are we impressed that Jesus could do so many miracles?

Are we impressed that Jesus did the things expected of the Messiah?

Are we impressed that Jesus over achieved the prophecies of the Messiah?

Tell your neighbor:

"Neighbor!"

"Jesus our Messiah"

"is an overachiever!"

Topic two: patience.

Did you catch that word "patience" in the reading from St. James?

Four times we heard "patience".

[Display third prop with the word "Patience".]



First Prop

Second Prop

Third Prop

And what a great time of year to hear that word;
 A time of the year when things are so hectic.
 A time of the year when our “to-do lists” are much too long.

St. James wrote that letter after the death of Jesus.

People were already impatient about the Second Coming of Jesus.
 Two thousand years later we, too, wonder about Jesus’ coming, not just 10 days from now at Christmas but in the final end days of the world.
 Since Jesus told us to not try to forecast the end of the world, we should be concerned about our patience about things right here and right now.

I have to confess that impatience is one of my frequent faults.

OK, call it what it is: a sin.

I don’t take much encouragement from what one writer has said.

“Impatience is one of the most frequently confessed sins in our confessionals!”

I get impatient at the stop light when it turns green but the cars in front of me just sit there.

I get impatient when I pick the wrong checkout line at the store and I wait and wait.

I get impatient when I see someone stumble through a task that should be done in an instant.

I get impatient when other people don't fit my time agenda.

So, how, with the grace of God, can I (and you too!) learn from St. James and grow in the virtue of patience.

How do I humbly submit my to-do list to other people and their to-do lists?

- I could make sure that I am not searching in my phone at a stop light
- I could answer when someone tries to get my attention
- I could really listen to others so I don't have to ask them to repeat themselves
- I could give shorter homilies
- I could stop complaining about all the grief other people are causing me

Think about this one.

Can we say?

“Neighbor.

I will try to be more patient.”

And without a doubt, we will need the Lord's help in learning that patience.

We are not the only ones who are learning about patience.

According to a recent article in Catholic Digest [*Commemorative Issue, 2013, page 17*] when Pope Francis was still a bishop back in Argentina he had a little incident which helped him humbly develop patience.

The lector will read that short story for us.

[Insert story here – see next page]

Again I ask the Lord's blessing upon each of us as we journey these last days to the coming of the Messiah at Christmas.

As auxiliary bishop, he once was due to preach the Spiritual Exercises for some nuns in another city and had to catch a train. He was running late in his office when a man who seemed mentally disturbed in some way—perhaps on drugs—came in, asking for confession. Bishop Bergoglio knew another priest would come soon, so he asked the man to wait for that priest because he had to leave.

But as he walked away, Bishop Bergoglio suddenly felt tremendous shame that he, called to witness to the gospel, was turning away a soul pleading for mercy. He went back and found the man and heard his confession, and then took him to a Marian altar to pray for the man's protection. When Bishop Bergoglio got to the train station, his train had been delayed so he made it to his destination after all. He realized that the Lord had had everything in hand all along and that he was to have patience, putting the soul in front of him ahead of what he calls "the mystique of efficiency" (the to-do list). As soon as he could, Bergoglio sought confession himself, his sensitive conscience weighed down by what he almost did.