

4th Sunday Advent Year “C”

December 19-20, 2015 *Getting the Final Pieces in Place*

Readings: Micah 5:1-4; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-44

Let the clouds rain down the Just one, and the earth bring forth a Savior.¹ These words read at the beginning of Mass from our Introit (Entrance antiphon) situate the Fourth Sunday of Advent in its proper liturgical context. It is clear that the waiting is beginning to wear a little thin, and the people are clamoring for something more. The impatience is almost palpable. A natural image has taken on supernatural meaning in this passage.

The text of this ancient hymn is a plea of the Prophets, the Patriarchs, and symbolically of the entire Church, all of whom long for the coming of the Messiah. As dew comes down from the sky and quenches the dry earth, only to evaporate back, so too will the Messiah come to save his people and return to heaven.

We recall the past offenses that necessitated a Redeemer, sins in which we share in our common humanity. We seek forgiveness as we await the birth of Christ for our redemption, a redemption that will bring the waters of life to desolate Jerusalem. Already, in this new Year of Mercy, many have come to confess their sins, preparing a way for the Lord this Christmas. Dozens of parish members, young and old alike, showed up yesterday to clean the Church

The final pieces are being put in place for the coming of the Savior. But what or whom will pour down from heaven? Will it be truth and righteousness, or judgment and wrath? Are we confident in the power of good over evil? Do we really believe that He has won the victory? If so, now we joyfully proclaim our conviction to the rafters, sharing the Good News of our Faith in the world. Others still linger in the darkness, not quite sure if they wish to emerge.

¹ *Rorate cæli, desuper, et nubes pluant justum: aperiatur terra, et germinet Salvatorem.*

We must also ask whether or not we are truly thirsting for the Just One, as the antiphon suggests? So often our tongues are parched, yet we are unaware of the cause of our thirst. The prophet tells us that we thirst for the clear cool fountain that is to spring up upon the coming of the Messiah.

Perhaps some have been away from the Sacraments, that saving balm designed to heal our spiritual wounds. If so, may they return with all their heart, and not delay, and may we welcome them back with joy. One of the O antiphons for the final week of Advent makes note of this on December 19th: *veni ad liberandum nos, jam noli tardare*, “O Root of Jesse... before whom the kings keep silence and unto whom the Gentiles shall make supplication: come to deliver us, do not delay- “do not tarry,” as in translations hailing from England. We might say today, “What are you waiting for?”

Guess what? He is waiting for you and me, giving us a final opportunity to prepare our minds and hearts for his coming. The graces flow forth from the sacraments, and yet, too often, we fail to take our medicine, the medicine our souls need and desire.

The Blessed Virgin experienced Advent in a singular and irreplaceable way. She is of course an essential piece of the preparation for Christmas, for the Just One, while coming down from heaven, did so with the *fiat*, the consent of the humble maidservant who sought nothing other than to do God’s will.

The Baptist was waiting for someone unimaginable to appear with fire, an axe and a winnowing fork, while Mary waits for a child, an innocent newborn baby. Each with tremendous yearning, they await their futures. Each in a sense larger than life, they yet remain transitions to the *adveniens*, the One who is coming. Let each of us recognize the yearnings of our hearts, and join them in these final days of watching and waiting.