

HOMILY for 3rd SUNDAY of ADVENT – Year A

This Sunday's First Reading & Gospel talk about the healing miracles that the Savior would bring to our world. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this new cute story that I'd like to share with you.

At a major medical convention, a noted internist arose to announce that he had discovered a new miracle antibiotic.

"What does it cure?" asked a member of the audience.

"Nothing we don't already have a drug for?" the internist replied.

"Well, what's so miraculous about it?" another doctor called out.

The internist paused. "Well, one of its side effects is short-term memory loss. Several of my patients have paid my bill three or four times."

The audience rose and gave him a standing ovation.

Anyway, at the beginning of this season of Advent, prophet Isaiah invites us to dream for a world where deadly weapons such as swords, spears, guns, and missiles would be turned into useful tools for daily living such as plowshares, pruning hooks, windmills, and solar panels. Last Sunday the prophet calls us to continue that dream by praying for a world where all creatures would get along and live in harmony with one another, including the most vicious and deadly ones such as the wolf, the lion, the bear, and the cobra. He certainly would want all human beings to imitate those wild animals and learn to get along and build up a just and peaceful society. This third Sunday, the prophet asks us to keep on dreaming for the heavenly world where people will find miraculous healing and hope. Here's how Isaiah describes that world in this Sunday's First Reading as following, "...Strengthen the hands that are feeble, make firm the knees that are weak, say to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not! Here is your God, He comes with vindication; with divine recompense, He comes to save you. Then, will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared; then will the lame leap like a stag; and the tongue of the dumb will sing."

Evidently the prophet asks us not only to dream and pray for the heavenly world but also to make it a reality by strengthening the feeble hands, by making firm weak knees, and by reassuring the frightened. In case we do not know the context of this Sunday's First Reading, let me remind you that Isaiah was telling us about a Jewish community that had experienced much tension and trauma with all of its neighbors after its exile, including Edom a nation laying south of it. So, its people were still frightened and weak upon their return home after years of being enslaved and exiled. They had been abused and mistreated in every possible way. Their hands must have carried tons of heavy loads as slaves and become feeble over the years. Their knees and feet must have walked for miles as slaves and got weak over the years. Their hearts must be frightened under constant yelling and whipping by their masters and grown scared over those years of slavery. So, Isaiah tried to rally and encourage the entire Jewish community to help out and uplift one another. If they were able to do that, they would help speed up the coming of their savior. Once He has come, He would bring vindication for all their suffering and transformation to their old world. He would perform miracles on the blind, the deaf, the lame, and the mute to restore their seeing, hearing, walking, and speaking abilities. He would replace their sorrow and mourning with joy and gladness. Wouldn't that be wonderful?

Likewise, prophet Isaiah tells us not only to dream and pray for the heavenly world but also make it a reality in our time by strengthening the feeble hands, by making firm weak knees, and by reassuring the frightened. His message for us now in this Advent is one of comfort and hope. He wants us to console and encourage those in need of liberation to be strong and stand up for themselves. Maybe the people of our time might not be enslaved under the yoke of a foreign power like the people of God back then. But, they are still enslaved in other forms of our current world such as wealth, worldly possessions, power, fame, popularity, pleasure, addiction, or a certain ideology. He calls us to tell them to search for a new life and snap out of that cycle of slavery. That is why our world needs a Savior to bring it a new life and free it from the world of evil and darkness. Wouldn't that be awesome?

Like the rest of the world, John the Baptist was in search for a Savior and shared his experience in this Sunday's Gospel as following, "John in prison heard about the works Christ performed and sent a message through his disciples to ask Him, 'Are you 'He who is to come' or do we look for another?' In reply, Jesus said to them: 'Go back and report to John what you hear and see: the blind recover their sight, cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, dead people are raised to life, and the poor have the good news preached to them. Blessed is the person who finds no stumbling block in me.'" Apparently Jesus confirmed with John the Baptist that He is the long-awaited Savior for the people of God by listing all the saving work and miracles that He had done for them. He restored sight to the blind, helped the cripples walk, cured lepers, got the deaf to hear, raised the dead to life, and gave the poor the good news that they have hoped for. All those good things that Jesus did during His ministry are exactly what prophet Isaiah and the people of God had dreamt for in today's First Reading. So, Jesus is truly the Savior and the fulfillment that the people of God had been waiting for.

My dear brothers and sisters, what are you dreaming for this Christmas? What kind of world are you hoping for in place of our current one? The world that Jesus created during His ministry is the one that we need at this moment and should dream for this Christmas. Let's continue to keep that world of His alive in our time by bringing miraculous healing and hope to our current broken world. For every good deed that we do until the end of this calendar year, we are not only fulfilling our promise to the Jubilee Year but also helping Jesus bring us His miracles and heavenly world once again.