



St. Anne
CATHOLIC
COMMUNITY

November 28, 2010 The First Sunday of Advent

“... ‘Come, let us climb the Lord’s mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob that he may instruct us in his ways, and we may walk in his paths’...” Isaiah 2:3

Dear Friends;

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way--in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.—Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities.

The opening paragraph of Dickens’ work about people caught up in the French Revolution still rings true for us today. We live in times of great social upheaval and change. Technology is driving change at an ever maddening pace. And our social structures are straining to catch up. There are prophets of doom and purveyors of hope trying to sell us the correct prescription for the times. In many ways we are divided, rich and poor, red and blue, liberals and conservatives, progressives and traditionalists. It is a time of extremism and polarization; the moderate voices seem to be out shouted.

The Church also finds itself on shifting sands. In the United States the fastest growing religious demographic are those who claim they have no religious affiliation or belief. One third of Catholics in the USA have left the Church. Christianity is in the midst of an upheaval comparable to the Reformation almost five hundred years ago. But today instead of the scandal of selling of indulgences it is the issue of sexuality that has the Churches of God roiling. And in the Catholic Church it is the question of how power is exercised and abused that is revealed in the pedophilia scandal.

Some of the divisions are manifesting themselves in the liturgy which is supposed to be the source of our unity. In his recent visit to Spain the Pope celebrated Mass. It is the custom in Spain to give people the option of either receiving on the tongue or in the hand while standing. While everyone at the mass followed Spanish custom, the pope’s handlers insist that anyone who receives from the pope must kneel and receive only on the tongue. Queen Sophia of Spain however, as is their custom, stood and offered her hands (like her people) to the pope in order to receive. And the pope gave her communion. I believe the Queen acted appropriately and so did the pope in giving her communion.

In the midst of all our divisions we look to the Lord who is coming to establish his kingdom of unity and peace. Often times, especially those in authority, mistake unity for uniformity. And they mistake peace for a mere cessation of conflict. The more they try to make things uniform the more strongly the impulse to express our differences becomes. When we do not accept the otherness of others we cannot know peace, only, a tense hostility that given time boils over.

The peace that comes from God is able to join together disparate elements not by forcing them into a monochromatic bland sameness. The peace of God is able to join us together as we celebrate our rich variety. This season of Advent invites us to step back and appreciate the complex times in which we live. As we do so, we come to recognize the variety and beauty that exists around us—and the One Source of that variety who we name God.

A year from this Sunday we will be implementing a new translation of the Roman Missal. That is the prayer book that governs the way the liturgy of the Eucharist is celebrated. This is part of an ongoing evolution that has been part of the Church’s journey through time. And in many ways it is a “Tale of Two Cities.” In some ways it is an improvement, in others it is deficient—just like us. It is not perfect and neither are we.

Over the coming year we will be looking at what is our liturgy and its importance in the life of our community. We will also explain what the changes are. In many ways the book we are being given reflects the politics and struggles that have been part of our history from the beginning of the Church. So we continue to muddle forward, learning how to love, as we journey to the Lord’s Holy Mountain.

Peace,

Ft Ron

