



December 5, 2010 The Second Sunday of Advent

Then the wolf shall be the guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lay down with the kid; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to lead them.—Isaiah 11:6

Dear Friends;

The American Edward Hicks (1780-1849) was trained as a coach and sign painter. He also was a Quaker minister. He used his sign and coach painting to support his work of proclaiming the Gospel.

The theme of the painting to the right is called the Peaceable Kingdom. It is a genre that most Americans would recognize even if they could not name the painter or the title.

The theme of the Peaceable Kingdom is taken from today's reading from the prophet Isaiah. Hicks created hundreds of these paintings between 1820 and his death in 1849. The Quakers are a denomination that traditionally shuns all forms of violence and in times of war are conscientious objectors (like early Christians) when it comes to military service.



Today's passage from Isaiah pictures all kinds of naturally opposing animals along with children and imagines them to be at perfect peace with one another. The coming reign of God will be based on compassion, mercy, gentleness and peace. Hicks depicts this in his paintings by placing all kinds of animals together along with children. Often he takes the theme into his own time by placing Native Americans and Europeans making peace agreements in the background.

The implication of Isaiah is we are to begin to live out the Peaceable Kingdom in our lives. This means rejecting the forces of empire whether in society, Church or our families. Empire is the dark side of human societies. Empire seeks not diversity but uniformity. In empire unity is the result of the weak being compliant to the powerful. Peace is not mutual respect for our otherness but domination of those who are different. Empires are doomed because they destroy creation and crush the human spirit. They hold us back from the harmony that God desires.

If you were like Hicks to paint your own Peaceable Kingdom what would it look like? What diverse elements, creatures and peoples would you put together to make a vision of Peace? It is just such a vision that we await during this Advent Time. We look for the Lord who "will judge the poor with justice and decide aright for the land's afflicted." (Is. 11:4) Maranatha—Come Lord Jesus!

Peace,

Fr Ron