



December 6, 2009
Second Sunday of Advent

"...Take off your robe of mourning and misery and put on the splendor of glory from God forever."

Baruch 5:1

Dear Friends,

It is so good to be back with you all. After seven weeks I was ready to come back and be with my parish family. It is especially good to return during this season of Advent, the season where we joyfully reflect on the Savior's first coming as we look to his coming again.

When it comes to the bible people often miss the point. Too often people are hung up on either end of two poles. One pole seeks to demythologize the Scriptures—that is, in light of science and reason we cannot believe the literal descriptions of miracles etc. so we dismiss much of the bible as fantastic fairytales. The other extreme seeks to prove that it is all literally true. Ironically this camp tries to use science to prove that it is all just the way it is written. Both often miss the point.

Biblical Scholar, Luke Timothy Johnson, suggests that the best way for us to look at the Scriptures is through our imagination. He proposes that scripture presents to us a vision—God's vision for the world. The stories in scripture are meant to help us imagine the world anew. When we use our imaginations the story becomes part of us. And we begin to realize the transforming power of God's word. And it becomes reality.

What will it be like when Baruch and John the Baptist's vision of repentance, peace and justice become reality? It may be like the story of the encounter of two World War II veterans—one American and one Japanese.

Some years ago a WWII veteran was working at the Arizona Memorial (Built over the sunken ship in Pearl Harbor Hawaii). One day there was a Japanese man who was walking through the memorial beating his breast and shouting "I am Japanese."

The American thought that he was going to have problems with the man. However the Japanese man came up to the American vet, and put an arm around his shoulder and said, "I'm sorry." Then he put his other arm on the American vet's other shoulder and said, "I am so very sorry," and he embraced the American with a bear hug and wept. The Japanese man's wife came up from her deep bow and she was weeping.

The American vet was weeping as were the people who were standing around observing the scene. They recognized the healing of two warriors who had carried many painful emotions for years.

What wounds are we carrying around? Have we tried to imagine our healing by reaching out to the other and offering or asking for forgiveness? Imagine how our world would be if we followed Baruch's invitation to set aside our bitterness and mourning; and place on our shoulders the mantle of Justice and Love. This is the world we await in Advent.

Peace,

Fr. Ron