

Homily on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent  
Mary Queen of Apostles Parish, Sand Lake, Michigan  
St. John Paul II Parish, Cedar Springs, Michigan  
Father Lam T. Le, Pastor  
December 8, 2019

**“On that day, the root of Jesse, set up as a signal for the nations “  
(Is. 11:10).**

A couple weeks ago, a letter from the Bishop's office arrived at the parish office, announcing that our parish teens will be confirmed by on April 26, 2020. As I read the letter the first reading for today's liturgy came to mind: "On that day, a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom. The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD, and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD." (Is 11:1-2). The Spirit is God's own life-giving breath that will be the source of wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. At Confirmation, before the anointing with Sacred Chrism, the Bishop stretches out his hands and says this prayer asking God to grant our youth these gifts:

All-powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by water and the Holy Spirit you freed your sons and daughters from sin and gave them new life. Send your Holy Spirit upon them to be their helper and guide. Give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of judgement and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence. Fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence. We ask this through Christ our Lord. R. Amen (*Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults*, no. 324).

Why does the Church, on this Second Sunday of Advent, want us to hear this proclamation from the prophet Isaiah? (Especially for those who attend the Masses at the recently dedicated church of St. John Paul II Parish. What is the significance of the first reading today?) Let's do some exegetical work: Isaiah's vision of a world transformed "on that day." Literally, by 8 B.C., the kingly descendants of David were weak, unjust, and lacking in knowledge and skills. The Davidic kings were a mere "stump" of the tree that grew from the root of Jesse, the father of King David. The first line of chapter 11 of Isaiah, "on that day," opens with a promise that a new life will arise from that stump, blossoming anew from the roots and will be a signal for the nations. These seven-fold gifts are essential for the King of Kings to rule wisely, as did his ancestor David. Christians believe this King of Kings is the Christ/Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. We recall this instruction of our anointing at Baptism:

God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has freed you from sin, given you a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and welcome you into his holy people. He now anoints you with the Chrism of salvation. As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet, and King, so may you live always as members of his body, sharing the everlasting life (*Rite of Baptism for Children* no. 62).

The baptismal font and ambry (which displays the holy oils), of our newly dedicated church, is intentionally visible as one enters the church. The placement of the font and ambry helps us to ponder on the fact that through Sacrament of Initiation, we are Messianic people, sharing in the offices of Christ: Priest, Prophet, and King. May the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Spirit bear fruit in our lives. We are called to open our hearts to the preaching of John the Baptist: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" Repentance – metanoia in Greek – is what the precursor of the Lord forcefully called the people to do. Metanoia entails a change of thinking, attitudes, behaviors, and relationships.

In the water of baptism, we belong to Christ and become kingly people. This kingly type of people is very different from what people of the world think. This is what metanoia is about. In the secular world, kingship is equated with oppression and domination. But a Messianic person translates kingship into service to our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. Just as in the first reading, the effects of spirit-endowed on the Messianic King brought about forgiveness and reconciliation, justice and peace -- "Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them . . . There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the LORD, as water covers the sea." – Now in us messianic people,

jointly to Christ are the Lord, through our repentance that people "might have hope" and "harmony with one another, in keeping with Christ Jesus."

"Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths: all flesh shall see the salvation of God" ([Lk 3:4, 6](#)). The path to salvation is that of repentance/metanoia. Repentance is a realization that we are truly kingly people through our imitation of Christ the Lord. Let the effect of the spirit-endowed gifts move us to service our brothers and sisters. So that to use the words of Isaiah at the conclusion of the first reading: "On that day, the root of Jesse, set up as a signal for the nations, the Gentiles shall seek out, for his dwelling shall be glorious." Yes, by virtue of baptism, we have roots in Jesse, Christ the Lord! Amen.

**Scriptural Readings:** Reading 1 [Is 11:1-10](#); Responsorial Psalm [Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17](#); Reading 2 [Rom 15:4-9](#); Alleluia Verse [Lk 3:4, 6](#); Gospel [Mt 3:1-12](#)