

Advent, Isaiah, ... to Call Your Attention. (Isa 61:1-4, 8-11; 1Thess 5:16-24; Joh 1:6-8, 19-28)

* According to the tradition of our church, the liturgical order for this Sunday includes the lighting of the third Advent candle along with the playing of the third stanza of “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”. As far as we’ve already walked through this, we were reminded about an important thing - the incarnate Son of God is on his way. It is most likely that Jesus is at the end of the journey from Paradise to the door of our church. A little more and the progression in the lighting of the Advent candles will be accomplished by the lighting of the fourth candle along with the playing of the last trumpet. Surely the trumpet will sound, *and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed*, (1Co 15:52). Doesn’t Paul’s insight sound joyful among us? Ah, here is another lovely thing of the day. The brief review of our Scripture readings shows a shift from portraying Christ as the Anointed Conquer to Christ as the faithful Master of our salvation. With awed hearts we are awaiting our Lord; soon he will come in order to replace our mourning with unspeakable joy when we’ll see him face to face.

* Without going into details, the Scripture lessons from (Isa 61:1-4, 8-11) and Paul’s letter to (1Thess 5:16-24) are better captured with a joyful sense of expectancy. Meantime the gospel reading from (Joh 1:6-8, 19-28) assures us of the certainty of a joyful expectation. As soon as we assign ourselves to the teaching of the Anointed One, why not express our joyful feeling in prayer, especially because he is at our service? Here we pray. *We thank you Christ and Master our God, for the work of our salvation you’ve already done in us and for the work that will be done according to your solemn promise. With your coming to us, we associate many positive changes. Please, comfort those who are mourning among us; and let your people march boldly on until your promised coming will completely free us from the bondage of our sinful nature and our adversaries. With this in mind, we call upon your holy name, Come, Lord Jesus. Amen. And he who is above any reproach says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen, (Rev 22:20).*

* Being asked, do you know who Jesus is?, the majority would answer positively, “Yes, we do?” Without doubt, we also exclaim, “Yes, we do” but there should be one exception, the “Pharisees” don’t know him who comes to work the works of God, said John the Baptist. In (vv. 24-26) of our gospel reading, we found the following remark. Thus, when the investigators had been sent from the Pharisees to John, they asked him, *“Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” John answered them, “I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know,” (Joh 1:24-26).* They had not known the Anointed One at that particular time, and they kept on not knowing him after many evidences including the miraculous signs, (Joh 9:30). But regarding the majority, there are still many things on Jesus’ account we have never known or have failed to remember, (1Co 13:12). Next, what shall we do, shall we enjoy or mourn?

The answer depends on ... , but our Sunday readings sound joyfully. Therefore, whom God is shown as the faithful One, let them rejoice; but those who still don't know the Lord of glory, let them know.

* If we would self-evaluate our knowledge of the Anointed King Jesus, the first thing we should come across is that our salvation and righteousness are entirely due to divine actions. Once Napoleon said, "Battles are won, not by men, but by a man." Saying this, the emperor spoke with reference to his own achievements after the victorious military campaigns. As Christians, we can also speak from our own experiences. But in our case, the spiritual battles are won, not by our own power but our chief commander, Jesus Christ. Meanwhile, it is our privilege to stay with Jesus on the battlefield as his soldiers sharing with him the victories over our adversaries. In this sense we can joyfully shout, "We've won!" over the victories accomplished by Jesus Christ.

* Now we address ourselves to the text from (Isa 61:1-4). The very beginning of Jesus' ministry to the poor, brokenhearted, and captives began from the anointing of Jesus by the Spirit of the Sovereign Lord, (v.1). Today the Anointed One himself proclaims the year of his favor towards all who are mourning over their sins, and we are his witnesses. Next, we may infer that the year of the golden opportunities is not shorter than 2000 earth years. It says that all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. In other words, *whoever believes and is baptized will be saved* during this time, (Mar 16:16a). Meantime the work of vengeance is also proclaimed by the Anointed, but it will be done for a day in contrast to the excellent opportunities having been accomplished for 2000 years or so.

* Now we address God's warning to the Christians who have not as yet thrown off their old evil nature. As a result of people's harshness, they deprive themselves from the unspeakable joy of receiving a crown of beauty instead of ashes; they deprive themselves from God's will to replace their mourning with a fresh life, they deprive themselves of being healed from their depressions and low-spiritedness. But the worst of all is that the unrepentant sinners deprive themselves of being wrapped in Christ' righteousness. As the result, they have lost the opportunity to be accepted by God!

* On the contrary, Isaiah says that the poor, brokenhearted, and captives rejoice greatly on hearing the good news. The proclamation of their freedom was believed and they responded. They trust in the Anointed One, they put their hope in him, and follow him. To them God gives a new name, *"oaks of righteousness."* For all creation that includes all kind of trees that belong to the Lord, who is a good gardener. He transplants and gives the established rootage to the "planting of the Lord." In Isaiah, it is clear, their place and the character of those people are the entire achievements of the Lord!

* The next ministry of the Anointed One is the lawful outcome of the previous one. Now the "planted of the Lord" are about to build upon the ancient ruins; they shall raise up from the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities ... (v.4). The picture of devastated Jerusalem caused by the war and later

having been recovered by the former captives is a motif for a greater recovery. This involves things that seem to be ruined forever as the result of one's fall, (Gen 3). It is true, the passing generation had been unable to mend the corruption of human nature. Through the Anointed One, all this inherited brokenness has been restored in part and it will be done completely in his 2nd Advent.

* "Hey! What good news!" the people of God have already enjoyed their spiritual restoration and the renewing in its first stage, the time of golden opportunities is already gotten under way, says Isaiah. The people of the New Covenant became known among nations, *all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are an offspring of the Lord has blessed*, (v.9). The period of our restoration in its first stage has lasted up to now; that is the period of the proclamation of the good news we've heard today. Be ready for the Lord because the time of golden opportunities is ending soon. In confirmation of what was spoken, we are going to light the 4th Advent candle along with the playing of the last trumpet on the next Sunday. By this symbolic act we'll express our longing for the Lord whose coming will completely remove our low estate for glory of the divine one - the faithful gift for faithful people, (v.8).

* Unfortunately or fortunately our time to preach the good news is also coming to an end until next Sunday. Now we are about to finish perfecting the knowledge of the Anointed King and his impending Advent with Paul's exhortation from (1Thess 5:16-24). As we've read this text, it may sound in our ears like the silver trumpet announcing that the great year of Christ' redemption is coming to an end. *Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*. (v.23). Now imagine that Paul wrote the conclusion of this letter in view of his approaching departure from the world. In that later opportunity to say us the word what do you think the apostle wished to say? Shouldn't his final remark be very important? Yes, it should. Then, let us hear it. *Brothers, Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil*, (1 Thess 5:16-22). That is what the apostle considered to be very important for us to know including the last remark about the Anointed One, *He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it*, (v.24). In response to the apostle, the congregation may say, Thanks be to God in Christ Jesus.

Amen.

Brothers, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Amen.