



SUNDAY REFLECTIONS – THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT, YEAR C, 16th December 2018

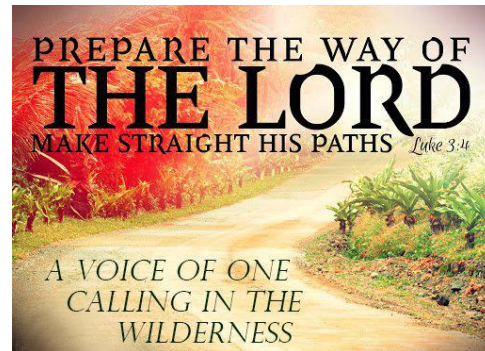
GOSPEL LUKE 3:10-18

When all the people asked John, ‘What must we do?’ he answered, ‘Anyone who has two tunics must share with the one who has none, and anyone with something to eat must do the same.’ There were tax collectors, too, who came for baptism, and these said to him, ‘Master, what must we do?’ He said to them, ‘Exact no more than the appointed rate.’ Some soldiers asked him in their turn, ‘What about us? What must we do?’ He said to them, ‘No intimidation! No extortion! Be content with your pay!’ A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to wonder whether John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, ‘I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, who is more powerful than me, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.’ And he proclaimed the good news to the people with many other exhortations too.

TO PONDER:

However you see this time now, either as the end of the secular year or the beginning of the liturgical year, it seems appropriate in this Advent Season to give time to these confronting questions?

- ✚ What does the life of Jesus now mean to me?
- ✚ How is his life affecting my own?
- ✚ Am I myself living both the promise and the potential?



REFLECTION by Paul Gurr ocard, JPIC Team

We are getting close to the end of the year. In some ways it will be no different to the end of any other year. We talk about the end of the year. But these are meaningless phrases for many people. They perhaps have meaning for Christian people for whom this marks the anniversary of the birth of Jesus. But for Muslims, for Buddhists, for the Chinese people, and for more than half the world's population who count the passing of time by a different calendar, then the celebration of Christmas means little.

I believe that its significance lies *less* in the fact that it marks the birth of Christ 2000 years ago, as it is an opportunity to reflect on the events of the past 100 years and to learn some important lessons. All of us have been part of the history of the past 100 years for a great many of us, only the second part of it. None of us remembers the First World War, and like myself, a great many of us were born after the Second.

Yet we are part of that history; it has shaped and affected us in our view of the world, of God, of ourselves. We have been the beneficiaries of the progress of the 20th and 21st Centuries in a way that our ancestors would find difficult to comprehend; yet at the same time it is likely that the world has never before been in such dire peril.

We are able to say that in the last 50 or so years, the world has eliminated God, and what is even more disturbing is that the world has become accustomed to the loss.

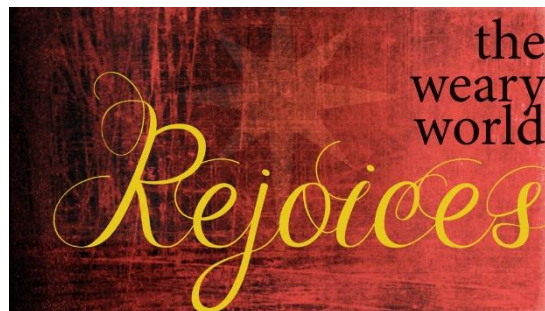
Nevertheless, there is a new longing for salvation; a yearning for something completely different from what humanity has produced on its own - a genuine hope for the Living and True God who will sweep away idols and ideologies along with the death and destruction they have brought in their wake; to replace them with Reconciliation instead of Confrontation; to replace them with Sister and Brotherhood instead of Domination.

For the Church there is no message of salvation, no proclamation of the Good news which does not take history into account. The Church is asked to reflect on her own history and on the witness she has given the world in this last year that is coming to a close. Reflecting on history will help heal memory. But just as we are called to recognise our own sin and errors and ask pardon and forgiveness of God, so must the Church do the same, and acknowledge her own sinfulness and seek God's forgiveness and adopt an attitude of conversion of heart.

As this year slowly comes to an end, we must place ourselves humbly before the Lord and examine our responsibility for the evils of our time.

Our present time has been described as one of both light and shadow. Our present time with all it contains, or better what it does not contain, is the desert through which we must travel. It is a desert which will purify, reconcile and above all allow us to encounter God - God who avoids noise and show and reveals Himself in the "humble sound of silence".

In this way, the Christian community will be cleansed in the depth of its heart and become once again a place for seeking truth.



INTERCESSIONS

- May we, in this time of preparation for Christmas, pray for the gift of freedom for children in detention and their families. Open our hearts that we might truly be a people that welcomes all, God of Rejoicing, hear us: **May we bring the Good News to the poor.**
- May this Advent season be a time of serious awakening to a new and deep reverence for life and for a firm resolve to care for this planet - our home and mother, God of Rejoicing, hear us: **May we bring the Good News to the poor.**
- May all the delegates at the Katowice COP 24 Climate Conference hold to a vision of birthing a new season of life for the earth so that all species may live in harmony and communion as one sacred earth community, God of Rejoicing, hear us: **May we bring the Good News to the poor.**
- May all those imprisoned - those whose civil rights are denied in many parts of our world, people in detention, Aboriginals - find a just resolution in accordance with human rights law. God of Rejoicing, hear us: **May we bring the Good News to the poor.**

Thomas Merton describes the scene of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, in his 1965 essay titled: "The Time of the End is the Time of No Room."

"Into this world, this demented inn, in which there is absolutely no room for Him at all, Christ has come uninvited. His place is with those others for whom there is no room. His place is with those who do not belong, who are rejected by power because they are regarded as weak, those who are discredited, who are denied the status of persons, tortured, exterminated. With those for whom there is no room, Christ is present in this world. "

