

Dcn. Jerry's Homily for the 2nd Sunday of Advent 12-10-23

Christ evokes an image of construction in today's Gospel, "Make straight the way of the Lord". It reminds us of all the road construction on US-23, Interstate 96 and Main Street in Brighton. But Jesus is leading us on a spiritual journey and the images of physical road building have their limits when trying to describe a spiritual journey. A worn-out road has potholes and needs to be resurfaced. There are bottlenecks and slowdowns during construction. Spiritual roadbuilding is different. Do I see the problems? Do I have greater problems with internal temptations or external temptations? Is the problem in the roadway or in my soul? Certainly, things I see or desire, jealousy for the goods someone else has or other external temptations are an issue.

But we are not a puppy who sees a tennis ball or a squirrel and is off and running in a different direction than before the distraction, the external temptation.

No, there is something else at work here. We want what we cannot have not because it is inherently attractive but because if we choose to pursue this materialistic goal, we believe that success in achieving this goal will make us a better person. We have been deceived as to how to achieve success and what success is. The Christmas ads for a new luxury automobile, a decadent chocolate or even a delectable cat food appeal to our desire to show off to use this material consumption as a measure of success. So maybe the answer to "How do we deal with temptation?" is to acknowledge that external temptation plays on our internal weaknesses. That was true for our first parents – Adam and Eve were tempted by the serpent because they were willing to believe that they could compete with the Lord.

For me that is the main cause of internal spiritual problems; trying to compete with God, usually by pretending that I am in control. It is important to understand the spiritual problems we face if we are going to make straight the way of the Lord. If we are building a road we can see the obstacles, rocks and trees. We can see the hills and test for poor soil conditions. But when we are assessing the stumbling blocks and hardness in our own hearts it is much more difficult to admit what we need to do to fill in the valleys, to make straight the way of the Lord.

Our parents, Adam and Eve, were tempted and failed in the Garden. They were not self-reflective; they did not ask for forgiveness of sin. Eve says, "The Serpent deceived me." Adam says, "She made me do it."

I wonder how different humanity would be if Adam and Eve had been willing to say to God, "You gave us everything we have, everything that is good. We owe everything to you and your love and mercy. We really messed up because we believed the lie that we could compete with you rather than know, love and serve you." How would God have reacted? There is one way to find out. We can live that life.

Adam and Eve did not admit their sin, or at least not initially. But as we continue our Advent journey. Our journey of anticipation and joy as we remember that the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity chose to become one of us. He chose us, he chose you and you and you and you, and he even chose me.

How do we prepare for the God who chose to have a personal relationship with each of us? He chose us knowing full well all the sins we have and will commit. Why did he choose each of us? Some of us really mess up. Our roads have been crooked. The potholes could swallow a car. Why did he choose me?

Two reasons. First – love. God is love. His love is covenantal. When God in the burning bush told Moses that, “I am who am”, he was making a statement that he always was, is and will be. He was also stating that he is always true to himself. He is self-giving love. Can we make straight the path of the Lord in our hearts which requires us to admit our sin and recognize that we are incomplete without him? Our heart may be too hard to accept his grace. Our heart may be too weak without his grace, but he is here to provide us all the tools, all the materials we need to develop a firm foundation, a straight and true path for the Lord to travel on his way with us.

Second – God knows the past, present and future. He knows what we are capable of. We are distracted, maybe even depressed and on the verge of despair, mired in the wasteland of our sin. God knows why he made us. God knows every saint has a past, every sinner a future. He knows the future and we do not. He knows all those saints who came before us who overcame sin to journey with him.

Use the remainder of this Advent, use the Penance Services and times of reflection to prepare the path of our heart for the coming of the Lord. Prepare the path so that on our ongoing journey of life we may accompany the Lord in grace and joy.

God bless you this Advent season.

~Dcn. Jerry