**4th Sunday of Advent, Cycle A**

December 21/22, 20219

Micah 5: 1-4a; Heb 10: 5-190; Luke 1: 39-45

I hope we all listened carefully to these Scripture readings today, especially the first reading from the prophet Micah in which we hear described our Lord and God who is coming, and the Gospel from Luke where we hear of how Mary responded to God. If we did, then I think we need to ask ourselves some questions.

“Is this the God we want to come into our lives? Is this the God who we will take into our lives and then into the world? Is this the God we will bring to people who ache for him, but do not recognize him in their lives?”

God is beautiful, is he not? He promises so many beautiful things, does he not? It is so easy for us to say, “Yes! Come Lord Jesus into my life and into the world! *Maranatha*!” But, are we really prepared to say these things? We need to be careful and hones lest we speak these words without preparation and without prayer. As all the saints will attest, to welcome the coming of the Lord into our lives and into the world requires we be purified and ready.

So, the question is, are we willing to be sufficiently purified and emptied of all that would place an obstacle in his path? Are we willing to empty ourselves of sin and things of this world that keep us from God? Or will we fall back into lives of distraction, isolation, and loneliness which are breeding grounds of sin and keep us from God and each other. Too many of us are lonely, isolated, and distracted from God!

We must remain alert, attentive, and receptive to God’s coming among us. We must be purified of our distractions, our sin, and especially our loneliness. We cannot be who we are meant to be if we remain isolated from God and each other. We must be purified! We must be willing to let go, to shed all that hinders us and keeps us isolated and lonely. We must be purified, emptied, forgiven, and vulnerable to the coming of God.

Advent, then, is not only a time of anticipation of the coming of the Lord as the Child of Bethlehem, but it is also a time to suffer the emptiness that must be ours if we are to be filled with the Lord at his coming. We must prepare a place for him in our hearts and in our world.

Let us strip ourselves of all that would distract us from his coming. Most of all let us get rid of the loneliness which we have allowed to take root in our lives. We need to be with him. We must allow for a relationship with the Lord who comes. We must pray. We must seek forgiveness. We must also allow for relationship with each other and we must take the risk of relationship with those in need of God’s presence.

We cannot lapse into a lonely self-concern that separates us from God and each other. There are too many lonely hurting people out there. What did Mary do after the Lord came to her? She went out to her cousin Elizabeth to announce the coming of the Lord, to enter more deeply into relationship with Elizabeth, to bring God’s Son, in her very womb, to someone else, to, as we are told later in Luke, magnify and praise God.

We are sons and daughters of God! And so we must remain attentive to God who fills us with his presence, who comes to be one with us, who sends us out to so many others who are lonely and isolated, to bring them the joy of the Gospel, as our Holy Father says.

Yes, we must be attentive, alert and in relationship with the Lord, who has come, is coming and will come again into our lives and into our world. We must be filled with the coming of Christ into our lives, filled after first emptying ourselves of sin and loneliness. Filled with the Word of God, and then going out to people to share what we have been given.

I repeat. We are sons and daughters of God! Let us always be attentive and filled with God’s love and grace.