

4th Sunday of Advent
December 23, 2018
“The Only Security”

Mi 5:1-4
Heb 10:5-10
Lk 1:39-45

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

We all like security. We all want to feel secure. We don't like to be threatened by the loss of our health, our livelihood, our emotional or mental health. Perhaps, most of all, we want to feel secure with God. Consequently, most religious people come to church, and they do their best to keep the 10 Commandments.

Certainly, coming to church and keeping the Commandments are important in our relationship with God. However, if we limit ourselves to these things alone, we could very well be neglecting what God really wants from us – Because going to church can be done out of routine; and merely keeping the Commandments will barely keep us out of jail!

The Gospel of Jesus demands much more than Sunday worship and keeping rules. The Gospel of Jesus asks us to risk those things which make us feel secure. Instead, we are to commit ourselves to the plan of God, whatever that might be. Furthermore, the plan of God unfolds moment by moment – And the only real security is our trust in the providence of God and His mercy!

One of the most important lessons we must learn is that God's ways and plans are seldom our own ways and plans. During the 6th and 7th centuries before Christ, the Chosen People were terribly insecure. They were beset by succeeding, conquering powers from the North, the East, and the South.

Unfortunately, instead of trusting in God, the majority, including the religious and political leadership, had lost their way. Although they kept the trappings of their religious practice, they were unfaithful to God in their hearts. They looked to pragmatic and forbidden alliances with foreign powers instead of to God, who alone could deliver them.

However, to the faithful few, the remnant, God revealed through the prophet Micah, that a savior would come. Although he would come from the least of them, he would be truly great! His origin would be from ancient times – And he would rule as a shepherd – but with the strength, the majesty, and the peace that only God can give.

Of course, the prophet was speaking of Jesus and the internal security that can be had in God alone!

In the Gospel, we encounter Mary and Elizabeth who were anything but secure in what the world considers important and necessary. Mary trusted in what the angel said. She became an unwed mother, but wedded to God. Unconcerned for herself, she journeyed to Elizabeth who was far too old to bear a child in most people's opinion.

What is wonderful, is that in their encounter Elizabeth recognized who it was that Mary bore in her womb. Moreover, Elizabeth praised God for the salvation that had come at last. She also praised Mary who had placed her security and trust in God – who would direct how her life would unfold!

Mary listened to the voice within and became God's humble servant. Elizabeth did the same. And the author of the Letter to the Hebrews tells us that this is what the Son of God did when he came into the world as one of us.

God did not want more animal sacrifices and offerings – Holocausts and sin offerings did not please Him. What pleases God is accepting His will, whatever that might be in our particular circumstances. Moreover, our most authentic worship is when we join ourselves to Jesus in the gift that he continues to offer in the sacrifice of his human life!

Brothers and Sisters, Christmas is the one season when most in our broken world remember to look outside themselves. At this time, we give gifts to favor those we love. And this is good. But what is God asking of us? What is God really asking in our deepest selves? What does the Son of God who is coming really expect of us? What are our better angels trying to tell us at this time and throughout the year? What does God want from us in a world that can never be secure?

Only we can answer these questions for ourselves – but answer them, we must!

And so, let us pray, at this time, to set the old securities aside ...so that we can possess a new security – a security which can exist in God alone, and in Jesus who is coming!

Amen.

December 23, 2018

Msgr. Russell G. Terra