

Church of the Divine Love
SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 10, 2023 10:15 AM
HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

Prayer before worship – on insert

THE WORD OF GOD

Processional Hymn **#56, vs. 3&4 – O come, O come, Emmanuel**

Opening Acclamation page 355

Collect for Purity page 355

Gloria (sung) page 356

Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: **Isaiah 40:1-11**

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

Second Lesson: **2 Peter 3:8-15a**

Gradual Hymn **#343 – Shepherd of souls**

Gospel: **Mark 1: 1-8**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze (printed on insert)

The Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form IV page 388

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn **#65 – Prepare the way, O Zion**

Doxology (sung)

The Great Thanksgiving:

Eucharistic Prayer B page 367

Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal) page 367

Hymn during Consecration printed on insert

The Lord's Prayer page 364

The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer page 337

The Communion of the People

Communion Hymn **#76 – On Jordan's bank**

Post Communion Prayer page 365

Prayer for Peace – on insert

Prayer of St. Francis page 833

Dismissal Hymn **#67 – Comfort, comfort ye my people**

Dismissal

Sermon Sunday December 10, 2023

Isaiah 40: 1-11; Psalm 85: 1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3: 8-15a; Mark 1: 1-8.

Sisters and brothers in Christ,

We often consider displaced people to be those who have been affected by war, persecution, or natural disasters. They are the ones forced to leave their homes. Whether they are the refugees of a war or the victims of a hurricane their lives have been uprooted. But there is also a displacement that happens within us. Displacement is more than a physical move, a change in location, or the loss of our physical home. I'm talking about the inner geography of our lives and the displacement that happens within us.

Have you ever felt out of place, or that you just were not in a good place, or like your life had been uprooted? Then you probably understand what I am talking about. You've experienced some form of displacement. Have you ever felt disconnected in your marriage, family, or other relationship? That's about displacement. Have you ever felt that your beliefs, values, or world view just no longer fit or

sustained you? Have you felt homeless even though you had a home? Have you ever felt as if you did not belong or fit in? Those are forms of displacement. If your life has ever been uprooted and left you feeling like you occupy space but are not really grounded then you know what it is to be a displaced person. Are you always looking for the next thing that will fix your life? Do you live with the as soon as illusion, the illusion that as soon as this happen or that changes then all will be well? That frantic searching might be a sign of displacement. If you can't get comfortable in your own skin then you might know what it's like to be displaced.

So let me ask you this. In what ways are you living as a displaced person? What parts of your life feel uprooted and disconnected? What is your displacement? Every one of us could tell a story about a time when we were in exile, alienated from life, our self, those we love, and our God. Some of us may be in exile now. Exiles live in a foreign land: a land of guilt and regret, fear, sorrow, despair. That is never where God intended us to live. It is not our true home but sometimes that is where we are. Thoughts, words, deeds, things done and left undone are the roads by which we came to this land of exile. Sometimes we intentionally choose those roads for ourselves. Other times it seems as if we have no choice. We do the best we can at the time but we are ignorant of a better way, a different way; God's way. There are many paths into exile but only one way out, the way of the Lord.

"Comfort, O comfort my people," are God's words to displaced people. Isaiah first spoke those words to people exiled in Babylon, people whose lives had been uprooted. Those same words come to the displaced people of God today. In some way the prophetic word is always directed to displaced people. And we long to hear those words of comfort. We want to find our place. More than anything displaced people want to be a placed people. But if you listen to John the Baptist in today's gospel (Mark 1:1-8) the way home, the way of becoming a placed people, is always through the wilderness. There is no way around the wilderness. You can't get out of it. You can only go through it. Advent reminds of that every year on this Sunday and the next. And if it seems strange that displaced people are given two Sundays of wilderness and John the Baptist then maybe we have misunderstood them both.

We so often have an image of the wilderness as empty, barren, and desolate; a place of demons and temptations; a place where the best you can hope for is to survive. But what if we've got it wrong? What if the wilderness is really a place of life, a place of hope, a place of connectedness, a place of finding ourselves and our place? In St. Mark's account of the gospel the wilderness is so much more than a testing ground for God's people or a place of exile. The spirit drives Jesus into the wilderness after his baptism and, yes, he faces temptation. But the wilderness is also the place where the angels waited on him. It seems that where there are temptations there are also ministering angels. Mark reminds us that Jesus often went to the wilderness by himself to pray, to encounter the Father. The wilderness then is a place of connection to the sacred. It is also a place of rest. Don't you remember that Jesus took his disciples to that quiet desolate place to rest? And it's in the wilderness that Jesus feeds the multitudes not just once but twice; the first time 500 people, the second time 4000 people.

So, if we think that the wilderness is this place of emptiness and barrenness, a place bereft of life, growth, and hope, a place of hunger and abandonment then we have misunderstood and forgotten that it is a place of prayer, a place of rest, a place of feeding, a place where angels minister to us. The wilderness is the place where we begin to become placed people, residents and connected. Isn't that what we want? I do. I want that for you, for me, for the world. I want us to have a sense of depth and rootedness, a sense of connection to ourselves and one another. I think that's what people of Jerusalem and the whole Judean countryside understood. That's what they heard in John's cry, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. "They leave the city and they leave their homes in the countryside and they go to the wilderness. They too are a displaced people. They are not, however, displaced because they leave Jerusalem and the Judean countryside. They leave because they are already living displaced lives in the city and the countryside. Their movement to the wilderness was not the cause of their displacement but the symptom of it. Something about John's voice, something about his message, something about the wilderness, said to them, there is more for you than you have now. There is a place for you. But you will only find it in the wilderness.

Every movement to the wilderness, that place of where the angels minister to us, that place of prayer, that place of rest, that place of feeding, is an act of repentance. And if we've misunderstood the wilderness then we've probably also misunderstood John the Baptist and the repentance to which he calls us. We too often hear John's call for repentance as a legalistic, moralistic, behavior based, turn or burn kind of repentance. But I don't think that's what John is saying or asking of us. What if John's call for repentance is the movement from being displaced to being placed, a move from occupying a space to taking up residence, a move from being a visitor to becoming a resident, a move from being ungrounded to rooted in depth. And who among us today doesn't need or want that? Who among isn't looking for our place of belonging, a homecoming, a sense of connectedness and wholeness, a way of life that is authentic and holy? That's the work of the one who is more powerful.

The wilderness always holds the promise of the one who is more powerful and if there's anything displaced people need it is that one. Because we live with the illusion and fear that whoever or whatever has displaced and uprooted us is the most powerful thing in our life but John says, no, no. That's not true. You come to the wilderness and you will find the one who is more powerful. In this passage, we encounter the prophetic voice of John the Baptist, whose mission was to prepare the way for the coming of Christ. As we reflect on this, let us examine our own lives, humbly acknowledging our need for repentance and renewal. Let us prepare our hearts to receive Jesus, allowing the Holy Spirit to work within us and empower us for the kingdom purposes He has for each of us. May we continually turn to Christ, embracing Him as our Savior, and allowing Him to transform our lives. **Amen!**

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Loving God, comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit. Give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation. Especially we remember before you:

Grace Schinella	Lourdes S.	Jess
Bob Curley	Michael & Family	Art
Chris Dickson	Kate Jones	Deb P.
Michael Echevarria	John Rocco	Judy
Christopher	Warren	Kristen
Charlotte H.	Bernie Walther	Celeste
Mo	Phil Ryder	Carolyn
Anthony Paribello	Barbara Curran	Del
Robert Hosey	Robert Sweat	Aidan
Sally & Roger	Sophia	Carol K.
Mary & Family	Ciara	Dennis L.
Nathan Treadwell	Gladys Hadija	Vincent
Jean Estinvil Quatorze	Jean Wildy	Nicolas

All people and countries suffering from violence, hatred and natural disasters.

Help us speak words of encouragement and offer deeds of kindness to them. Bring us with them, into the unending joy of your kingdom. Amen.

Prayer before Worship

Almighty God, who pours out on all who desire it, the spirit of grace. Deliver us, when we draw near to you, from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections, we may worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Hymn to be sung during the consecration:

Father I adore you,
Lay my life before you,
How I love you.

(Repeat twice with second verse starting with Jesus and third verse starting with Spirit.)

Prayer for Peace

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominions and glory, now and forever. Amen