

St Pius & St Anthony Homily 2nd Sunday Advent Year C2

This season of Advent has us preparing to celebrate Christmas anew this year. Another way of saying that is that we are 'We are watching for the 'Word' to come? So a good question for our gospel today is, "Where does the word of God come from?" From a priest Caiaphas in Jerusalem, from a ruler named Pilate or any Herod in Judea, or how about the top of the world, a ruler named Caesar in Rome? Nope! Our gospel today says the 'Word of God' came to Little ole' John in the desert! Not to his dad who would have been serving as priest on and off in the Temple Duty, but to John a solitary out in the desert! Not a likely place to imagine the Word of God coming from? This tells us that a Messiah is coming like nothing the world has ever seen; our Savior showing up in a such an unlikely place means God is coming for everyone, especially the normally marginalized and excluded. John describes himself as a lonely little voice out in the desert, but God has given him a word, and John is faithful to that word: Himself making preparations for the Messiah's coming, but also spreading the word and helping others to prepare themselves for Jesus the Messiah to come!

Speaking about where things come from? There is a story about a little boy that went to his mom and asked, "Where did you come from?" and the mother thought 'Oh, no, not yet talk (birds/bees) yet, that's deep, so she responded quickly, "a stork dropped me down the chimney to your grandparents." Well, the child thought, something doesn't sound right about that', so he went to his dad and said, "Dad where did you come from?" and the dad thought "not now, how involved/detailed can I get right now, with a five year old", so he also responded quickly, "a lot could be said about how things come about, but your grandparents found me one day in a cabbage patch." Really feeling puzzled, the child went to his grandmother and asked, "Grandma, where did you come from." Well, honey, my mom and dad loved each other so much, and wanted to share their love, so them being so close day after day and night after night, I was born naturally from their living so close together.' He responded with relief, "Oh, thank you grandma, I was getting worried about us, finally I find someone in my family that's normal! Maybe he knew more than they thought, about how we come into this world.

Well, this story about the boy figuring out how things naturally come about, illustrates what St Luke is about when he seems to go off on tangents about all those specific details from history. More than any other gospel writer, Luke is the nearest thing the New Testament has to a historian and Luke takes pains to

establish the exact circumstances of both John's and later Jesus' birth as we will hear on Christmas eve. So today he sets the scene of John's appearance in the desert preaching and baptizing, by being very specific about world events and who could be looked up in history books as leaders, to precisely date Jesus' coming at that very moment in history. So we hear about which Caesar was emperor, about Pontius Pilate, about Herod, Philip and Lysanias sharing power, which priests had Temple Charge Annas & Caiaphas, and even which John we are talking about: Luke specifies him to be the son of Zechariah. All of these details are historical testimony to say that at a particular time in the history of the world, God's plan unfolded here on earth to bring about our salvation. And when Jesus appears, we will hear on Christmas eve/day similar care from Luke about the historical timing of Jesus' birth and ministry (*And Luke continues this concern for history in his second volume, we call the Acts of the Apostles, too*). What all this detail is about is Luke's care to show that 'Jesus (or John), they did not just fall out of the sky, they were born, worked, and did God's will in actual historical circumstances, they experienced human life as we know it, they underwent actual birth entrances into this world like us, to help us understand that God's intervention to save us came about through human means and human ways. **God relates to us so that we can relate to him.** That truly is the Christmas message, that God became human in Christ Jesus (born that little babe in Bethlehem, to show us what God created life to be like us, to save us, to reveal how we are to live our way to heaven). We were not dropped out of the clouds onto earth at birth, and are not going to be unnaturally snapped up one day into clouds. (Jesus didn't drop down from sky fully grown-ready to go jumping into ministry). No, God respects a natural order of history (He created it), and at the right moment, Jesus takes flesh in the womb of Mary and is born to us.

St Paul gives a very brief account of Jesus' birth when he writes in Galatians 4:4-5 "When the **fullness of time** (*Paul's 3 words for Luke's 63 words*) had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to save those under the law....." The fullness of time, another way of saying, ***at just the right moment according to God's plan.*** Luke reminds us of exactly when that moment was, and since Luke was so exact about saying where Jesus (& John appeared) at particular time and at that place, He is telling us that he knows us and came for us-living right among us in history. Christmas is real. God is real and God really enters into everything human with us, to show us the way throughthe way to Him..... that is Christmas that we have a savior who understands, and knows us through

and through. Hebrews 4:15 says “we have a high priest who is able to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin.” And I love how Luke goes on by recoding that John quoted Isaiah specifically, about straightening the way, raising up valleys, and lowering mounts, opening the way, so that ***as Isaiah 40:6 says it*** “all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” All flesh, meaning all people, all times and all places. That is Christmas, and that is how our God wishes to save us, **save us all**, by calling us to watch for Him and follow him; serving and loving everyone (high and low) in His name. We prepare by watching for that coming Word, and helping others prepare too.

Don't we hear already, that faint song, the angels are singing on Christmas eve, “Glory to God in the highest, and **peace to all** people on earth!”