

HOMILY 3rd SUN ADVENT YRA 2019

In the Gospel reading today we find John the Baptist in prison for condemning King Herod for adultery with his brother's wife. Herod wanted John to suffer for his condemnation so you can bet he was not having a pleasant time in prison. Separated from his faith community and being in a place of suffering he began to doubt his faith in Jesus. He told his disciples to ask Jesus: "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" He was hoping for a yes or no answer, but as usually happens when Jesus is asked a question he does not give a direct answer. He helps us to answer the question for ourselves. He tells them: "Go tell John what you see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them." What do you think? John had to answer that question for himself, his disciples had to answer that question for themselves, and each of us has to answer that question for ourselves. Once we answer that question we can figure out who we are in relation to Jesus.

Our theme for Advent this year is "Make Room For Jesus." Part of making room for Jesus is finding out who he is to you. And maybe when you search for him his is not who you expect him to be. He was not who John and his disciples expected him to be. They expected him to be part of the priestly class, or a prophet, or a warrior king like King David, and they expected instant perfection in the world upon the coming of the Messiah. Jesus was not any of those things. We need to discover who he is and how he works in our lives, and that will be a little different for each one of us. Sometimes we expect that once we find Jesus in our lives that everything in our lives will be immediately perfect. That is not how Jesus works in our lives. He works through our human nature, we do our part and Jesus does his. Once we figure out who Jesus is our lives, then we can figure out who we are and what we are meant to become. When

we make room for Jesus we need to let him in to all areas of our lives. If we only make room for him for the one hour we spend at Mass on the weekend, we are not allowing him to shape our lives.

I want to read to you one of the Faith Sharing articles written by one of our parishioners, Lisa Zajac. “During my mid-thirties, I found myself struggling to find my place not only in life, but also in the church. I was a successful single nurse but was longing for more as my life was not progressing the way I thought that it should. In March 2013 while attending a parish nurse retreat, the keynote speaker Dr. Patricia Cooney-Hathaway, a professor at the Sacred Heart Major Seminary, inspired me. During the break, I was able to speak to her, and through my tears shared with her my feelings of isolation. She gave me her contact information and asked me to reach out to her for further discussion.

In May 2013 I had my first appointment with Dr. Cooney. I will never forget the first question she asked me, “What do you feel when you receive the Eucharist?” My answer was simple yet sad, ‘Nothing.’ It was then that I knew I had lost faith and could not see God’s presence anywhere in my life. With the encouragement of Dr. Cooney, I attended a directed retreat at Manresa and read books to begin to find God around me. I then returned to church and I still recall that moment because I came to mass in shorts. I apologized to Fr. Jim for what I was wearing, and his reply was, “I don’t care what you wear, I am just happy you are here.” From this moment on, I felt I belonged once again. Within a couple months, I realized that the Eucharist provides the nourishment that I need to continue my role in serving others. In September 2013, I returned to school to earn a Doctor of Nursing Practice Degree so that (in my mind) I could ‘accomplish something.’

During monthly meetings with Dr. Cooney the past six years, I went from not knowing where the Holy Trinity was in my life to finding it hard to identify areas where they aren't around me. While implementing my doctoral project, I discerned my important work as an oncology nurse and how to help other bedside caregivers. Additionally, I have recognized my significant role as a disciple of Christ, called to be with others during their times of greatest need. While I earned my degree in 2015, I realized that the diploma isn't what defined my greatest accomplishment these past six years; rather it's this spiritual journey that has led me to contentment with where I am now, recognizing how fulfilling my life truly is."

Lisa was a practicing nurse in her 30's, accomplished by our cultural standards, but still felt that something was missing in her life. She had not found who Jesus was to her, but she was doing her part to find him. She went to a parish nurse retreat and there she found someone who could help her on her spiritual journey. She went on the retreats and read the books and now she can answer the question: "Who do you say Jesus is." She finds Jesus, she finds God in the Eucharist and in the Trinity. That is who Jesus, God is to her. She found a Parish Community where she is comfortable. She could then go on to answer the question: "Who am I?" She has a doctorate in nursing and finds fulfillment in oncology, but that does not totally define her. Her spiritual journey that brought her to Jesus is what is really important to her. Jesus affects all areas of her life.

So, make room for Jesus. Who is Jesus in your life? You do your part and Jesus will do his. Once you find Jesus in your life you can figure out who you are and what is important to you. Make room for Jesus in all areas of your life.