

December 10, 2017 - 2nd Sunday of Advent

Just a reminder that our penance service is this Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. Nine or ten priests will be here, hopefully ten so that we can have a choice for everybody. Almost all of them are bi-lingual in something, except me. I am, but I choose not to let people know it. That's worked out great.

I asked a question last night of the congregation and this question, I'm going to ask again, just to see. How many of you do not drive at night? A few of you. How many don't want to drive at night? See, that's always bigger. What I'm thinking is during Lent, having about three mornings where I sit in the confessional for two or three hours and offer a chance for you who don't drive at night, to have an opportunity to come in during the day. I have been wearing those yellow glasses at night for years, and I know it's getting worse, so I don't like to drive at night either. But, as a priest you have to, because when you come back from the bishop in Tucson, a lot of times it's night. Like Jesus said, "it's night." So, we'll do that starting in Lent. Hopefully, it will be in the morning and it won't go past lunch. But, if it does, I'll offer it up. God knows, I can afford to.

There was a middle-aged woman undergoing some major surgery. She had a near death experience in the operating room. During this near-death experience, she gets to see God. She asks God, is she going to die right now? God says, "Oh no, you have 30 or 40 more years." So, when she comes out of it, and she starts healing, she decides, "before I leave the hospital, I'm going to have an extreme makeover." She has a facelift, liposuction, breast augmentation, tummy tuck, and whatever they do in the back end here. She even changes her hair color to platinum blonde. After she heals up, she gets all dressed and she's sashaying out the front door of the hospital, and an ambulance going to the emergency room, hits her and kills her. She gets to the pearly gates and she sees God and she says, "I thought you said I had 30 or 40 years." God said, "I'm sorry, I didn't recognize you."

In the ancient days in most of the world, if an important figure from the government; the governor, the tribal chief, emperor, king, would come to visit your village or town or your city, he would send out an advance party, maybe a year in advance. They would go out with a construction crew, and they would make the paths straight to your village. They would take the mountains and hills and level them off and fill in valleys and the low points. Because, a lot of times, these people were carried in that chair with four strong guys, and they didn't want them tripping and falling. You wanted the ruler to have a good trip, because when he came, you wanted him to be in a good mood. You didn't want him to get there and growl and say, "kill everyone here." So, they did that. That's what Isaiah is alluding to, in our first reading. He is saying, "do that for God; do that for your spiritual life, do that so that God has an easy chance of getting to you." That's preparation, metanoia, it means take the right road and not the other one. It means that we make our lives as easy as possible to live. If we are morally straight, if we are law abiding citizens, life is easier than telling lies, and being immoral, and watching out for the police over your shoulder. When Isaiah's talking about this, he is like, make your life easier. Then we see John the Baptist saying the same thing. "The Messiah is coming, make straight the paths, fill in the valleys, lower the mountains, make it so that it's easy." You know this country has so many different terrains. We have the west; driving with cruise control can be a pain because you are going up and it's slowing down and slowing down, and then you're going down and it's speeding up and speeding up. Especially the old cruise controls. People are passing you and holding you up and you're racing semi's and they're passing you, and it's all not very fun. But, when you get out to the mid-west, you put on cruise control and what happens? You get bored; you just keep going and going and going. But, it's easy, it's smooth, it's not flat.

I've been out to the mid-west so many times and it's rolling, I don't know why they say it's flat. But then you get out to the Rocky Mountains and it's like, here we go again. It's the same kind of thing with our spiritual life. We want it to be smooth, we want to be able to do an interstate, right to our heart for God. We have to make it easy for God. God will never force himself on us. God will never say, "hey, you have to do this." You know it's funny, because if he did, how many of us would still be in the Catholic Church? If God enforced all these rules like the government does. None of us; very few of us would be in the Catholic Church. "You broke the fourth commandment, you broke the sixth commandment, you're gone!" But He doesn't. He lets us make the decision to come to Him. To open our hearts and souls to Him. So, John the Baptist is also talking to us; Isaiah is also talking to us. Make it easy for God to get into your soul; your heart. Don't make it hard, make it easy. The valleys in our lives stand for, sins of omission; things we should be doing but aren't. For example, spending more quality time with our family, spending a few moments in prayer with God, going to confession regularly, not twice a year because there's a penance service, going regularly. Writing on your calendar each month, confession, just like we do doctors appointments. The mountains are the selfish and sinful habits that we built up with sins of commission. Things we do wrong. We spread gossip and criticism, we are living double lives with hidden sins like pornography, treat other people bad, drive like a nasty person on Hunt Hwy. All these things are mountains that need to be brought down and leveled out. All we have to do is walk into the sacrament of confession and then go to communion. Then we're back to making God have a very easy way into our hearts and our souls. When we get to the second Sunday of Advent, that's what the message is. Make God's way into your heart and soul just like a freeway in the mid-west. Smooth and easy, so that we get Him immediately and with full benefit.

God bless you