



Homily for
THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
10/11 December, 2016

Fr. Dwayne's homily follows...

Third Sunday of Advent – C – 2016 December 11, 2016 Holy Spirit (SH/HT)

Is 35:1-6a, 10 James 5:7-10 Matt 11:2-11

“Go and tell John what you hear and 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.”

I. The Grant County Sheriff's deputy – Adam Day – who requested that the man who assaulted him be shown some leniency made head line news this week. Even though he had been assaulted by the young man – Dakota Dempsey – the officer asked that he be allowed to spend Christmas with his family before he would serve his jail term. Officer Day said it was important to him that Dempsey be able to spend Christmas with his family and that his son not have a memory of Christmas without his dad. This is a heart-warming story we often hear especially this time of year.

This is also a good example of mercy combined with justice – some would say such a combination is not possible – but the officer asked for mercy and at the same time the young man involved will have a sentence he will need to fulfill.

II. This is only one of many examples of charitable deeds which seem to multiple - or at least we are more aware of them this time of year. Daily we can receive reports of any number of good deeds, both locally and nationally:

- charitable giving certainly increases: any number of service organizations request and receive significant gifts this time of year
- there are special drives – or projects - for struggling families, children, the physically or mentally disadvantaged
- often times individuals look for ways to do something special. For example, families will often times adopt another family and provide gifts for them. Just this past week I received some gifts anonymously which the giver is asking me to give to our parishioners.

These kinds of things, as you know, are beautiful ways to translate our beliefs and intentions into meaningful action.

III. In order to test Jesus' credibility as the possible Messiah, John the Baptist had to ask, "Are you the One who is to come or should we look for another?" John the Baptist, the immediate forerunner to Jesus, had to ask; apparently he wasn't sure.

- perhaps John expected Jesus to be loud and bombastic like he was
- or maybe he wondered if Jesus was just going to stay in the desert, eating a meager diet of locust and wild honey
- or, maybe John was thinking the Messiah would be like the popular of a Messiah: a military leader who would gather an army and drive out the Romans

So, John had to ask. If Jesus is not the One, then John would have to shift his hope to someone else. Jesus's response is: "Look at the evidence...what do you see?"

- the blind see
- the deaf hear
- the lame walk
- lepers are cleansed
- the dead are raised

In other words, Jesus' credibility doesn't rest on words alone...but on his words translated into action. Also, please note, Jesus doesn't say he is going to be a conventional leader – someone who like a governmental leader or a military leader. Instead, his leadership is in service to people.

III. We can spend a lot of energy “thinking” about doing something, but the real proof in the pudding is the doing.

I'm real good at this: I can pour a lot of energy into thinking about doing lots of good stuff, but the real credibility lies in translating the good intentions into visible and specific actions.

It is our actions which change the world. And it is our *actions* – clearly evident in the Advent season – which stand in sharp contrast to the violence, thievery, abuse, disrespect – which surround us on a daily basis.

Just recently I read a story about a Chicago parish where the pastor and a large number of parishioners organized to confront drug dealers in their neighborhood. Every Friday they marched through their neighborhood to demonstrate and confront drug dealers. As a result, crime and drug trafficking has significantly dropped in their area.

It is action which changes lives!

Perhaps the actions of Officer Day will transform the heart of that young man so that he has warmer, more positive feelings towards law enforcement.

Perhaps the gifts we give, the special deeds we perform for others, the extra effort and time we spend in charitable action will – little by little – change lives, increase hope and bring more light to drive away sin and evil.

The power of the gospel of Jesus Christ is not found in listening to the tongues in our heads, but in seeing the evidence demonstrated by the tongues in our shoes, by the very specific ways in which we live the gospel.

That was true at the time of John the Baptist and Jesus. And that is true among us today, those of us already transformed by the power and grace of Jesus Christ.