**A Great Light**

 It is Christmas Eve and we are all excited to be here waiting and watching for our Lord to come. Yes, we are remembering the first time He came as a little baby, to crush sin and death. He came as the great light of the world. But also, tonight, we are anticipating His second coming in His glory because it has been predicted by some scholars that our Savior will come back again on a Christmas Eve! How amazing that would be for Him to find us waiting to celebrate His first coming by worshiping in His Church.

In our first reading from the Book of Prophet Isaiah, God promised a season of exaltation for Jerusalem. It would be a time of victory and vindication. God said her Lord will glorify the City of Zion. As it is always with God, and His people, God always use the analogy of a wedding to explain to us His relationship with us. Our God is about a Bridegroom marrying His bride. That is how similarly, marriage is special to God. God, when we are restored into God’s glory, we would be God’s delight. Other nations and kings would see the new glory bestowed on us and they would wish to be Jerusalem.

According to Isaiah, the Messiah is coming as a bridegroom to marry His people. He will be the Builder of this New Jerusalem. He will give her a new name. When Jesus came He told Peter, upon you, I will build my Church.” He did change the name of His people to “Church.” It is then that the joy of the people would be full when that happens. Despite our sinfulness, the Messiah would first wash us clean, and we would be whiter than snow and we will become like virgins or sinless in His eyes. Again, God uses human concept, virginity, as an analogy to describe the purity His Church would have.

All God is talking about here through Prophet Isaiah is about the circumcision of our hearts so we will be pure in the sight of God. God delights and rejoices in His bride. He is exulting us to repent and become His adopted children. He want us to be one with our God who is always looking for His bride so He could shower her with His grace. It is then we would be able to boast in the glory of God and not in our own glory. God’s love for us would be similar to the love the father of the prodigal son showered on him when he returned home after repenting.

In our second reading, St. Paul in the Acts of the Apostles, again talked about the exaltation God has bestowed on His people in freeing them from slavery from the hands of the Egyptians. He freed them with show of power and mighty deeds, bringing them to the Promised Land. Paul made a connection between God’s promises to king David that from his descendant would come the Messiah. He pointed out to them that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of that promise. And they need look no further for another Messiah.

In pointing out to them about Jesus, Paul explained that God had sent John the Baptist ahead of the Messiah. John came preaching repentance as a preparation for the coming of the Messiah. Repentance means a turning away from sin and a turning toward God. Part of our Christmas preparation has traditionally been the making of a good confession and that is a practice that is in line with the message of John the Baptist. From the Sacrament, we should also seek to receive the grace to turn our thoughts to God. John at the end of his mission pointed out to his followers that he is not the Messiah but the one who comes after him, is the One.

In humility, my brothers and sisters, if John expressed his unworthiness to untie the sandals of Jesus! John, whom Jesus referred to as the greatest of all born of a woman! If John showed such great reverence to our Lord, my brethren, how much more should we show reverence when we eat and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Eucharist. By receiving Him unworthily, especially, when we commit a mortal sin and we have not confessed it in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We should refrain from receiving the Eucharist until we are reconcile with God through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

We profess, during Mass that we are not worthy to receive Jesus under the roof of our mouth! But do we really mean what we say? Or we are just offering Him lip service? Our response when we say Amen, must come from the bottom of our heart. Otherwise, Jesus will not be able give us His grace and the grace that comes from receiving the Eucharist, will not lead us to becoming holy as our Lord intended us to be. John the Baptist showed us that with humility, we must show much more reverence when we receive the Eucharist because we are truly and really receiving Jesus’ body, blood and divinity under the appearance of bread and wine.

In our Gospel reading, we heard how Matthew traced the genealogy of the Messiah from Abraham to David, from David to the exile, and from the exile to St. Joseph, the husband of Mary and the foster father of Jesus. Each series, was made up of 14 generations. This genealogy has some pretty scary names of sinful people. We can think of David who committed serious sins coveting another man’s wife, which led to adultery and then murder. In the linage of Jesus, you would find Rahab the prostitute. This tells us that God can write straight with crooked lines. So we should not be afraid of giving up our sinful life and turning toward our loving and merciful God.

As we come to receive the Son of God in the Eucharist, let us ask Jesus for His grace surrender our life to Him so we can become His brothers and sisters