

Commentary on the Readings for December 18, 2016

The Fourth Sunday in Advent

The Readings for today pick up again the theme of the "*Coming of the King...*" but in a way that asks us to examine our hearts to see if we are really getting ready to receive Him.

In the **First Reading** from the *Prophet Isaiah (7:10-14)*, we have the familiar story about the Prophet's confrontation with King Ahaz of Judah. (Circa **735-715 BC approximately**) Judah is faced with an invasion by the Assyrians, and Ahaz believes that an alliance with Egypt is better than relying upon God and His promises to save Judah. In frustration, Isaiah gives Ahaz a "sign" that is so unusual it should have caused the king to take notice, but he refuses and plunges Judah into disaster. The essence of this story is that God's plan will triumph in spite of mankind's refusal to cooperate. This is also a veiled warning to us today to be careful about our relationships.

In the **Responsorial Psalm (24:1-6)**, the psalmist spells out the conditions that God expects of us in presenting our worship to the King of all nations. Ascending the "mountain of the Lord" was the Jewish way of saying "Let us go to Jerusalem and its temple in order to worship the Lord of all creation." It fits into our reading for this day because it asks us to prepare ourselves for the coming of the "King of all nations" at Christmas time.

The **Second Reading** is from St. Paul's *Letter to the Romans (1:1-7)*. In this opening passage and greeting, Paul lays out the whole purpose of his and our call as Christians, and that is "called to belong to Jesus Christ" and "called to holiness and apostleship" so that he and we might spread the name of **Jesus** and by doing so, bring others to believe.

In the **Gospel Reading** from the *Gospel of Matthew (1:18-24)*, we hear the familiar story of how Jesus came into this world "through a woman" in what appears to be a normal birth process. However, as we now know, the story is anything but "normal." It is the fulfillment of the promises made to David and to his successors, such as King Ahaz, and to all mankind, for He, Jesus, is the savior of the world. Without our belief and trust in this truth, we would still be in sin and our faith would be worthless. (See **1Corinthians 15:17**)

Advent is a time of soul-searching and preparing, of waiting and hoping, of examining our heart and actions to see if they conform to what God expects of us. Are you worshipping with all your heart, mind, body and soul? We are all called to holiness through our baptism and our worship of the King of kings. We cannot afford to wait another minute. Our preparation time is nearing the end. Something to think about during your Prayer time this week! **MFB**