

The Power of Three

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 7:10-14, Romans 1:1-7, Matthew 1:18-24

The fourth Sunday of Advent is today and Christmas Day is on Thursday. So the fourth week of Advent not counting Sunday, a Holy Day, is three days...three days? That's not much time. We won't even get much candle wax melted on the fourth candle. So why bother? Why not just start Christmas early – ignoring the fact that for many, Christmas began shortly before Halloween; but that's another story. So what can be done in three short days?

I went to the internet to see what the world says can be done in three days. I found out the following: You can binge watch a TV series, complete a juice cleanse, whiten your teeth, write a song, re-read the seventh Harry Potter book, go on a shopping spree, learn a Beyonce dance, travel to the moon (this is the time NASA needed to land on the moon), or digest a steak. I guess you can eat a T-bone steak in 10 minutes and it takes up to three days to go through your intestine. Who knew?

But in matters of faith, three days and the number three are quite profound. The Trinity, The Holy Family, The Magi, day 3, the creation of land and water, the number of days Jonah was in the whale, the number of days Mary and Joseph looked for Jesus before finding him in the temple, the number of days St. Paul was blinded after meeting Jesus before his conversion and most important the number of days Jesus was in the tomb before the resurrection. In the Hebrew culture, the number three is often associated with divine perfection, completeness and wholeness.

In today's second reading St. Paul notes in his letter to the Romans of his three characteristics: slave, apostle and a chosen one. He became a slave to God's will and no longer a slave to sin. As an apostle he was sent to preach God's Word and spread the faith. As a chosen one he is sent to serve others; to do the work of God. For us this summarizes our character, the divine marks we received at Baptism – priest, prophet and king.

Maybe we are at a very joyous time in our life or like St. Joseph in the Gospel, are confused, perplexed, maybe even marginalized or hurting from loss. Either way we are always reminded that we are not alone. In our world we face the darkest time in our year as the Winter solstice is this weekend, Sunday to be exact, when we live the shortest day of the year and the longest night – when light is the least in the northern hemisphere, and we are the farthest away from the sun.. It reminds me of the ancient Gaelic prayer:

As the rain hides the stars, as the autumn mist hides the hills, as the clouds veil the blue of the sky, so the dark happenings of my life hide the shining of Thy face from me. Yet if I may hold Thy hand in the darkness, it is enough. Even though I may stumble in my going, Thou dost not fall, Thou dost not fall.

So while we may be using these last three days before Christmas to shop and bake and decorate, let's find some time to reflect on how God is always by our side by maybe reflecting on our true character of priest prophet and king. To make it a good time for us to investigate and remind ourselves of what priest prophet and king really means instead of binge watching a show or whitening our teeth.

Or we can make it even more simple by reflecting on our own life, the moment of our own creation, our own Christmas when God formed each of us in His image and likeness breathed His divine life into us, smiled and gazing at us utter these three simple words – You are mine.

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