

## HOMILY FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT YEAR OF MATTHEW

1. Waiting very hard
  - a. Waiting in line to get a ticket to some event, Waiting room of clinic, then doctor's office
  - b. Computer age made this worse
    - i. Program takes longer than 30 seconds to load, want to push buttons to get it going
  - c. Waiting is hard because it feels like our time is being wasted and we are not in control
  - d. We become impatient, frustrated that we are out of control, trying to get back into control
2. This impatience often extends to God
  - a. In first reading Isaiah sings a dream to Israel.
    - i. People conquered by Babylon, leaders and thinkers, forced to leave their country and live in Babylon
    - ii. Poor people and peasants in Israel under the control of Babylonian governors
  - b. Isaiah sings this vision of the desert coming to life, flowers will bloom on the prairie
    - i. God is coming to bring vindication to His people, will give sight to the blind, the deaf will hear, the lame will walk, the mute will sing
    - ii. God will lead his people back to their homes in Israel where they will sing with joy and drive away sadness and mourning
  - c. Imagine the people feeling impatient with Isaiah
    - i. Nice words but when, why won't he lead us back now
    - ii. Many probably abandoned their faith, becoming pagan giving up on God
    - iii. Wonder where they were when people of Israel were freed and allowed to go home
3. In recent times many have had to struggle being patient with God
  - a. During the centuries of slavery many black people looked to the promises of God such as those in first reading to give them hope and endurance
  - b. When listen to Negro Spirituals hear themes of hope for freedom and vindication by God
  - c. MLK, Jr. used these visions to lead African Americans to demand their civil rights
  - d. News: Nelson Mandela of South Africa led his people in South Africa out of apartheid
  - e. People suffering under such injustice would seem to have good reason to be impatient
  - f. Easily see them giving up either to despair or angry violence
  - g. Inspired with patient hope these people have moved closer to their promised land
4. Isaiah and James speak not just to Israel or people suffering from blatant injustice but also to us
  - a. we may not have the physical disabilities but we may well suffer from spiritual disabilities
  - b. blind to beauty and wonder of God and His work in our life,
    - i. do we see our neighbors, even enemies as people deserving basic human dignity
  - c. sometimes we may be deaf to hearing God speak to us
    - i. not just in the scriptures and Sunday Mass but especially in the silence of our prayer

- d. Perhaps we are mute by not encouraging others in their struggles
- 5. Promise is that Jesus has come to heal us, to lead us to the joy of being truly loving human beings
  - a. Believing that we have been healed by Jesus can be difficult
  - b. If I been healed why am I still spiritually blind, deaf or mute, Have I really been healed?
- 6. Patience with God and ourselves needed
  - a. people who have been physically blind, deaf or lame for a long time when healed do not suddenly experience the world like others
    - i. blind have to learn what they are seeing, to distinguish between colors and boundaries
    - ii. deaf will have to learn to understand meaning of words
    - iii. lame will have to learn how to walk again
    - iv. When doctors effect a major change in body even when positive, there is a period of therapy
    - v. When I have had my surgeries, health care people push me to walk within a day or two despite the pain of getting out of bed
    - vi. Body needs to exercise and learn how to deal with change even when difficult
  - b. Same way with our spirits
    - i. Recognizing that we have been spiritually blind, deaf or mute is only the first step
    - ii. We have to claim and practice the healing offered to us by God
    - iii. If we want to see, we have to practice looking for the beauty of God and the goodness of others
    - iv. If we want to hear God, we must practice at listening to what God may be saying to us
- 7. Trying to change bad habits into good ones, trying to live a life of holiness and surrender to God usually does not just happen because one day we decide we want to change
  - a. It is like going 100 mph in one direction and suddenly deciding I need to go back 180° immediately
  - b. For most of us we must make this turn gradually
  - c. It will take patience and firm commitment to God to make needed changes in our life
    - i. Like trying to relearn a skill we may have lost to disability
    - ii. There will be times of frustration and doubt
    - iii. Has God really healed me, do I really want to be a holy and loving Christian
  - d. With patience and a firm endurance we can change, begin to see the wonder and love of God
  - e. We can be sensitive and honor the dignity of those around us
  - f. We can feel in our hearts the good news that Jesus truly has come into our lives