

The Sustenance of Hope

2nd Sunday of Advent

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The word hope is used in the Bible 129 times. However, when you include similar attributes of hope such as patience, perseverance, expectations, endurance, resilience, encouragement, appear more than 400 times. The Advent Season is about hope and expectations. The first reading from the prophet Isaiah, hope sustains a whole nation to imagine beyond its current predicament of sufferings. The envisioned peaceful coexistence overflows beyond the human realm to domestic and wild animals as well.

Prophet Isaiah tells the people of Israel, who were suffering oppression and injustice that their suffering will be a cause of blessing, even to their oppressors saying, “On that day, the root of Jesse, set up as a signal for the nations, the Gentiles shall seek out, for his dwelling shall be glorious.” When the justice of God prevails, the harmonious coexistence is also projected on the environment, “There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the Lord, as water covers the sea.” Therefore, the justice Isaiah envisions both social and environmental justice rooted in the “knowledge of the Lord.” This vision gives us hope in our time as well. In the last ten-days, there were ten-mass shootings in various US cities. Every year, we realize that human greed has altered our environments, causing climatic change. Aware that being proactive, we could bring positive change in the existing and ever-increasing social and environmental chaos, it is the word of God that keeps us to be hopeful that good will prevail over evil.

St. Paul to the Romans affirms God’s unfailing promise saying, “Brothers and sisters: Whatever was written previously was written for our instruction, that by endurance and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.” Like Isaiah, St. Paul reminds us that God’s chosen people will be signs of God’s glory to other nations and peoples, benefacting us as the coheirs of the messianic era prophet Isaiah envisioned. Such hope also gave sustenance to the enslaved Africans in the Americas and beyond that God’s justice will one-day dawn, liberating them from their oppression and maltreatments.

The Gospel reading heralds that the messianic era is at hand but preached and proclaimed in the most from unlikely person, a prophet who lives and acts out of the accepted social norms and geographic peripheries. Yet, strikes the chord of the social nerves, “Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham our father.’ For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones.” The Advent season is offering us to assess on how our hope is sustained and what is a Christ centered society, we envision. John the Baptist is asking us to have a true encounter with the Messiah by producing good fruit of our repentance. We cannot change the world without first changing ourselves, a conversion of heart that hopes and believes in God’s active presence in our midst and who acts through us to bring about harmonious change in our society.