

I really love today's first reading, because it tells you about how merciful and loving our heavenly Father is. All His generous promises in the first reading are addressed to His people who have broken their relationship with Him in their hearts, and worshipped God only with their lips, but their thinking was far from God's ways of thinking, so they do not deserve any of His wonderful gifts. This reading give us an image of our heavenly Father who looks upon His broken people and moved with a profound mercy towards them He decides to teach them and bring them back to Him through the prophet Isaiah. What a wonderful merciful Father we have!!!! He chooses to restore His relationship with us, without us deserving it. He wants to look at us and delight in us again as His beloved sons and daughters. The Father is faithful, as the Psalm says, no matter how unfaithful we are. This is what Advent reminds us of.

But first He always sends out a message through His prophets in every age to encourage you, to change your way of thinking; your way of thinking about Him, about yourselves, about others and about your experiences, because only when you see things with God's eyes and interpret things in His ways can you recognise that He is coming into your life.

Someone who is pessimistic and is focused on negative things will be less likely to notice when Christ wants to enter his/her life, like Mary of Magdala who when Jesus died let her bereavement overtake her mind so much that she didn't recognise Jesus after His resurrection. She thought it was the gardener. The same happens with someone who misinterprets the Scriptures or the things that people say and develops false expectations, like the disciples who misinterpreted the Scripture passages that were about the Messiah and so they felt disappointed when Jesus died, not understanding that the Messiah was destined to die and then rise on the third day. They had false expectations, therefore when Jesus re-entered their lives they first didn't recognise it was Jesus who was walking with them on the road to Emmaus, but only when Jesus gave them the correct interpretation of the Scriptures that their hearts came on fire.

We are called in today's Gospel by Jesus to prepare the way for His second coming. That preparation means changing the way we think about God, ourselves, people and our experiences, because Jesus comes to us not only at the end of time, but today as well. Today He speaks to you through different ways, by the help of the Holy Spirit, and wants to let you know how much he cares about you and others. But you have to eliminate any negative thinking, so that you not only hear or see His message, but also understand it correctly.

So I want to encourage you to do the Advent retreat which was posted on our parish Facebook page, and also by email. If you want to share how it affected you or what you have learnt from it, please share it after Mass in the hall. I am already enjoying the benefits of this retreat, because it helped me to recognise a hidden pride in my thinking, and as soon as I noticed it, I felt as if pride was pulled out of me, and I felt a great sense of peace filling my heart. With the help of the Advent retreat I also realised that I focused too much on details, rather than on the bigger picture of peoples' lives, and this recognition reopened my eyes to the big picture of peoples' life. I am now also experiencing an increase of longing for Jesus deep down in my heart, something that I haven't experienced for a long time.

Recently I received a new understanding of what 'levelling of the road' means as we prepare for Christ's coming. The road is our thinking, and levelling the road means, cutting off any twists in the road, ie. cutting off any twists in our thinking, and replacing these twists and negatives with a faithful, hope-filled and love-focused thinking, because that's the path that Jesus follows; that's the way through which Jesus enters our minds and hearts. So please read those Advent retreat notes and prepare a straight path for the Lord.