



Bringing Home the Word

Third Sunday of Advent (C)
December 12, 2021

Fear and Intimacy

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

The bronze sculpture in the Vatican Museum by Francesco Messina, *The Young St. John the Baptist*, shows him pointing as if responding to a question or pointing the way. There was anxious anticipation amongst the Jews about the coming Messiah. Yet, we have no reason for anxiety.

Anxiety comes from fear of the unknown. When we're unsure of how things will turn out, we get anxious. When we lack control or can't plan for our security, we get anxious.

Fear and anxiety are the enemies of intimacy and love. Fear makes us run

far enough away so we feel removed from danger, safe from the aggressor. Or it drives us to hold someone, seeking strength in attachment. But fear doesn't create space for true intimacy. It either creates excessive distance or suffocating closeness.

John didn't want to create fear or caution of God. Rather, he wanted to open hearts to receive God in love. Ours is not a God of fear, but of love.

In Jesus' Incarnation, he shows just how much he wants to be with us. He comes to make his home among us, while waiting for us to accept him and make room for him. He doesn't force but comes with patience and love.

Knowing that he loves and wants the best for us, we merely need to make ourselves known to him by revealing our deepest needs to him with prayer.

John the Baptist came to prepare the path for the Messiah, and many responded by asking, "What should we do to prepare?" Put aside anxiety and fear, simply prepare a home for him, and then let him in. +

Sunday Readings

Zephaniah 3:14-18a

The LORD, your God, is in your midst... Who will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in his love.

Philippians 4:4-7

Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God.

Luke 3:10-18

Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Messiah.

John didn't want to create fear or caution of God. Rather, he wanted to open hearts to receive God in love.

A Word from Pope Francis

Many Christians have that face...from a funeral wake, a face of sadness. But Christ is risen! Christ loves you! And you have no joy? Let us think a bit about this and let us ask: "Do I have joy because the Lord is close to me, because the Lord loves me, because the Lord has redeemed me?"

Gaudete Sunday, December 13, 2020



REFLECTION
QUESTIONS
QUESTIONS
REFLECTION

- What causes me fear or anxiety?
- Can I give my anxiety to Jesus and ask him to bring me a greater sense of peace this Christmas?

The Days Hasten On

By Kathleen M. Basi

I'm not a fan of archaic language in religion—*thee* and *thou*, *ye* and *art*. So, my first Christmas as a liturgy director, when I really examined the words to all those beloved Christmas carols I'd been singing my whole life, I was appalled to realize how much work it took to understand them.

That is, until Unitarian Rev. Edmund Hamilton Sears' exquisite text to "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" turned my world upside down.

Christmas carols, at least the first verse or two, are so familiar that we often rattle off the words without really thinking about what we're singing. This carol from 1849 reflects the song of peace on earth that the angels sang the night of Christ's birth. It asks us to consider that the heavenly song, far from being a message for that one time and place, has been sung continuously while "two thousand years of wrong" have passed. And yet...

*...man, at war with man, hears not
The love song which they bring.*

Every day, people and the headlines prove that "warring humankind" rages on, piling violence upon violence: wars, police brutality, human trafficking, terrorism, hate speech, graphically violent entertainment, 140-character assaults on human dignity.

We may consider ourselves outside the problem, but we're all susceptible to clickbait, and we most likely consume



the violence and sex that Hollywood doles out without question. We probably have been guilty of belittling strangers via social media, or at least in private among our family and friends, despite knowing how it feels to be on the other side. Humanity is every bit as broken as it was when that holy infant was born in a stable to teach us to pursue a kingdom built on justice and peace.

For me, "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" serves as an annual reminder that the days are hastening on. I can't afford to be complacent, thinking that whole Second Coming thing was just a figure of speech. E.H. Sears' verses underscore that even in this season of shopping, parties, and decorating, there is a bigger picture than my own commitments, a

larger responsibility I must undertake as a follower of Jesus. My life has an expiration date, and I need to be ready when it arrives.

Most of all, Pastor Sears reminds me—and all of us—that his song, a call to peace, still resounds in the world, and we can hear it, if only we will...

*...hush the noise, [we] men of strife
And hear the angels sing. +*

*I can't afford to be
complacent, thinking
that whole Second
Coming thing was just
a figure of speech.*

PRAYER

*Lord, you are generous
and kind to all your people.*

*Instill within me a
compassionate and generous
heart that I may respond to
my poor sisters and brothers
near and far away.*

From *Joyful Meditations for Every Day of Advent and the 12 Days of Christmas*,
Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

December 13–18

Monday, St. Lucy:
Nm 24:2–7, 15–17a / Mt 21:23–27

Tuesday, St. John of the Cross:
Zep 3:1–2, 9–13 / Mt 21:28–32

Wednesday, Advent Weekday:
Is 45:6b–8, 18, 21c–25 / Lk 7:18b–23

Thursday, Advent Weekday:
Is 54:1–10 / Lk 7:24–30

Friday, Advent Weekday:
Gn 49:2, 8–10 / Mt 1:1–17

Saturday, Advent Weekday:
Jer 23:5–8 / Mt 1:18–25

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