

Christmas 2
Year B 2020
Mt 2:13:24:37

Come Holy Spirit, give life to my words.

In the name of God, creator, redeemer and giver of life.

Amen.

The prophets remind us that there is always hope.

Even in the darkest of times.

They proclaim God's faithfulness to those
whom God has created and loved from the beginning of time.

Jeremiah proclaims God's promise
of restoration to the people of Israel in anticipation of their exile.

In today's reading from Jeremiah,
the people of Israel are about to flee
in the wake of the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem
which will result in the destruction
of both the city of Jerusalem and the Temple.

Jeremiah proclaims not only the tale of destruction
but God's impending response.

God promises to gather **all** peoples across the face of the earth.

God's promise extends to
the neediest, the outcast, the lame, the most vulnerable.

God promises consolation and peace for the journey.

And Jeremiah proclaims that God
shall lead them to a place of goodness and plenty.

That their mourning shall be turned to joy
and that God's people shall be comforted.

Jeremiah proclaims a new covenant with God that will not be broken.

Jeremiah's proclamation of a new covenant
provides a vision of God's restoration and redemption.

It is important to note that
God's promise of a new covenant requires a response.

God promises to make the journey comfortable
but there can be no journey
without people willing to engage in the journey.

There can be no covenant without the willingness of two parties.

A new covenant requires effort, faithfulness and trust between all involved.

This requires hope.

Hope in a future better than the present.

It seems appropriate to hear these words of Scripture as we embark on a new year.

A year which presents new opportunities for hope.

New opportunities for mourning to be turned to joy;
for comfort of those wandering in exile;
for **all** peoples across the face of the earth to know the peace of God.

Today's gospel reading shows us the manner in which God Accomplishes these actions.

It is through the birth of Jesus.

We learn of the incarnation of God's vision for all peoples as Jesus is born to humble parents who are traveling to meet the requirements of the authorities.

It is reported that they were unable to find adequate shelter and thus, the babe Jesus is born in a stable.

King Herod, learning of the true nature of the baby, seeks to destroy Jesus.

Joseph, Mary and the babe are forced into exile.

It is important to note, that what is edited out of today's gospel reading is the slaughter of the innocents.

An unknown number of innocent children are killed as Jesus and his parents flee.

The incarnate vision of God's vision of comfort and peace becomes a refugee.

Joseph, Mary and Jesus learn firsthand the life of outcasts, foreigners in a strange land, immigrants.

Jesus, the Word made flesh,
is a child of a family forced to wander,
to move to stay ahead of those authorities
who meant to extinguish God's vision
for all peoples.

And yet, Mary and Joseph didn't lose hope.

They trusted in the messengers
who provided direction for the journeys
they were forced to undertake.

They were willing to work with God,
to work on behalf of God.

They trusted in God's covenant, God's promises.

The remembrance and celebration of Jesus' birth
is a yearly reminder of God's vision
born into a world of political domination,
poverty, fear and despair.

A time much like our time.

A time when leaders fail to ensure
all are protected, especially, the most vulnerable.

A time when many have lost their faith.

A time when many are filled with
doubt and fear that a better time will never come to be.

A time of universal lamentation.

But what we have learned over the course of history
is that God will prevail.

God will prevail because the people of God
understand that hope can and does overcome fear and despair.

That acts of generosity, kindness and love
can and do triumph over hate, prejudice and oppression.

What we have learned from the life of Jesus
is that feeding the hungry,
clothing the naked,
and sheltering the homeless does matter.

These acts can turn hopelessness and despair
to comfort and peace.

Acts which restore justice and peace
for **all** peoples across the face of the earth.

There is rising despair for some members of our families,
neighbors, and friends.

We have what we need to bring hope,
comfort and peace to so many in this world.

But we have to commit.

We have to stick with it.

It's going to take a long time
to help support so many who have lost everything.

The question is, do we have the will to follow through?

Are we willing to commit
to changing the course for so many
by engaging in acts that result in restoring comfort and hope?

I know that this parish has done this many times.

I believe that this parish can commit and do this many more times.

The question for each of us is:

Are we willing to commit to concrete acts
which result in restoring hope, comfort and peace?