

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Fourth Sunday in Advent

By: Fr. Bob

"Excuse me," said an ocean fish.

"You are older than I, so can you tell me where to find this thing they call the ocean?"

"The ocean," said the older fish, "is the thing you are in now."

"Oh, this? But this is water. What I'm seeking is the ocean," said the disappointed fish as he swam away to search elsewhere.

He came to the master in sannyasi robes. And he spoke sannyasi language: "For years I have been seeking God. I have sought him everywhere that he is said to be: on mountain peaks, the vastness of the desert, the silence of the cloister, and the dwellings of the poor."

"Have you found him?" the master asked.

"No. I have not. Have you?"

What could the master say? The evening sun was sending shafts of golden light into the room. Hundreds of sparrows were twittering on a nearby banyan tree. In the distance one could hear the sound of highway traffic. A mosquito droned a warning that it was going to strike.... And yet this man could sit there and say he had not found God.

After a while he left, disappointed, to search elsewhere.

Stop searching, little fish. There isn't anything to look for. All you have to do is look.

Our scripture for this Fourth Sunday in Advent challenges us to look and see the advent of The Christ.

In our first reading from the book of the prophet Samuel, David is sincere in his attempt to build a place for God to dwell. But he is misdirected. It is not for David to contain God and place God in a location. God will place David and David's people who are to come.

Some people would be all too content to say that God is to be found on a mountain top. Some would say that God is

found while meditating on the Ocean. Some would find the almighty in a great cathedral—or others in a small village church.

But we are reminded that all of the above are true and yet none of them is true. Since God can be found everywhere—we must continually look for God and especially, perhaps in the most difficult places.

We are reminded that we may not seek the presence of God solely in the symbols of this beautiful season, not in the innocence of an infant lying in the crib or under the star. We may not find the divine presence solely in the pageantry that surrounds us nor even in the liturgy, however holy and sincere. Not even the Sacred Scriptures have a monopoly on God's presence—nor is God solely present in the Eucharist!

The reality of the incarnate presence of God in Jesus challenges us to see the face and know the experience of God in the least ones of this earth. God is present, not only in the church but God is also sleeping on the streets and lying in the gutters. God stands on the welfare line, waiting for the stamps that will buy bread and milk. God lies not only in the crib but also in the hospital bed and prison cell. It is God's presence in the mentally and physically handicapped that searches for our attention; it is the very body of Christ that suffers the solitary scourge of A.I.D.S. While we hum happy tunes and sing our favorite carols of the season, we must also hear and heed the voice of God howling in the poor and the needy, as well as in the victims of social injustice and public apathy.

As we prepare to celebrate the reality of Christmas, the feast of Emanuel, God-With-Us, let us also be prepared to recognize and attend to the God who is with us and whose presence can be known and attended in every conceivable venue and despite a myriad of distressing disguises.

Let us use this last week of preparing to look about us and see God pitching God's tent in our midst day after day.

READINGS OF THE WEEK

2 Samuel 6:1-16 Romans 16:25-27 Luke 1:26-38

December 21, 2014

靈 修 生 活

人 類 期 待 將 臨 期 的 高 峯

張 春 申 神 父

今天是將臨期第四主日，這個星期內普世教會將要慶祝耶穌聖誕節。上面所讀的這篇以聖母瑪利亞為中心的路加福音，將人類期待和接納耶穌基督的模範，非常深刻地為我們指示出來。教會在聖母瑪利亞身上，發現自己應當達到的理想。

我們說路加聖史在這段福音中，視聖母瑪利亞為人類期待耶穌基督的模範，因為按照聖經學家的研究，在天使佳播向瑪利亞所說的話中，暗示着她是以色列歷史的高峯，她是舊約中所說的熙雍女子。所謂熙雍女子便是舊約天主子民的另一個稱呼。為什麼聖母瑪利亞是以色列歷史的高峯呢？原來以色列民族是天主的選民，天主所寵愛的民族，普通我們只看這個民族的背叛天主的一面，其實在這背叛天主的民族中，常常有不少忠貞的義人。他們遵守盟約的誡命，他們敬主愛人，他們期待默西亞的來臨。路加福音一開始所提的若翰的父母匝加利亞和依撒伯爾便是一例。至於聖母瑪利亞，天神祝賀她、讚美她充滿恩寵、標榜上主與她同在。這一切一方面果然顯出天主對她的寵愛，另一方面當然也顯出瑪利亞應該是一位標準的以色列女子。今天我們在教會的默想中，承認她是整個舊約民族歷史的高峯，也可以說把以色列歷史中對於默西亞的期待，濃縮在聖母瑪利亞身上了。其實只有這樣一顆充滿恩寵的期待的心，會蒙受天主聖神的庇蔭，懷孕至高者天主的兒子。

我們也說路加聖史在今天所讀的福音中，視聖母瑪利亞為人類接納耶穌基督的模範。有關這一點，聖經的言語比較清楚。首先瑪利亞是貞女。貞女的意義當然有關生理，然而教會傳統中一向在貞女身上，更加重視的是她的心。貞女的心是全心、全靈、全意、全力熱愛天主；天主是她的萬有。她以童貞的生活方式，來象徵她的心只為天主。這是貞女的意義。這也是接納耶穌基督的模範。雖然基督信友中並非都是如同聖母瑪利亞一般守貞。不過，大家都奉她為模範；以一顆全愛的心接納耶穌基督。

其次瑪利亞自稱為婢女，聆聽天主之話的婢女。舊約中往往以「貧窮」來描寫義人。所謂「貧窮」，並不只強調物質方面，而也是指心靈的空虛，謙卑自下。瑪利亞自稱婢女實在表達了舊約特別注意的一種心靈態度；它不自滿自足地以為富裕。相反，它常是渴望天主，而感到心靈的空匱。因此「貧窮」的義人，一心渴求天主的話來充實自己。而舊約歷史的高峯、聖母瑪利亞自稱為婢女，顯出她這樣自覺空匱、渴望接納天主聖言來臨。事實上，這位婢女接納了天主聖言在祂胎中親自降生成人。

聖母瑪利亞是教會的典型，也是我們每人的典型。在整個將臨期內，我們效法她。如同她一般，期待與接納了天主聖言---耶穌基督。那麼在聖誕期內，我們想起是聖母瑪利亞把小耶穌送給了人類，那麼我們是否也該努力，把我們生命中的小耶穌，以我們的生活，以我們的言語與行動，送給四周的弟兄姊妹呢！

摘自「妙音送長風」

本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 四 年 十 二 月 二 十 一 日

撒下 7:1-16; 羅 16:25-27; 路 1:26-38