

2nd Sunday Advent Year A

A priest and a protestant pastor were standing by the road holding signs. One had a sign that said, "Turn around." The other a sign that said, "The way you are going leads to doom." As they were standing there, a car drove by slowly and yelled at them, "You bunch of religious quacks! Find something better do with your time than scare people," and drove off before either could say anything. The priest looked at the pastor and said, "I guess we should have just put on our sign 'Danger! The bridge is washed out ahead.'"

Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven has come near. Prepare the way of the Lord. What does it mean to repent? It simply means to turn around. Why? Because the direction you are going is not to Christ or not as straight a road to Christ as you could be on. In the First Reading we have mention of the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Spirit that were given to us in Confirmation. They are to help us believe and to live in our faith. One of the gifts is the Fear of the Lord. It mentions it twice. The second time is *his delight will be the fear of the Lord*. I wonder if we focused on this one gift, the Fear of the Lord, what our lives would be like. What a repentance it would be for us to simply fear the Lord. Our lives would be filled with delight because we would know how amazingly blessed we were. Why is that? Fear of the Lord would remind us what a blessing it is to pray. What a blessing it is to read Sacred Scripture. What a blessing it is to go to Mass and be in a Church where God dwells. And how to receive Holy Communion is the greatest gift in the world. How much we would prepare for that awesome opportunity, and pray that we did not treat it as common. Yes, we would truly make straight His path if we but feared the Lord. Another name for this gift is Wonder and Awe. We would tread upon the earth far more lightly and treat our fellow man far more respectfully if we but feared the Lord. It says in Scripture that to fear the Lord is the first stage of wisdom. It make sense because we know very truly who we are if we fear the Lord and what our relationship is to God. We are not God and we are honoured to worship Him. St Maximilian Kolbe said, "Be Catholic. When you kneel before an altar, do it in such a way that others may be able to recognize that you know before who you kneel." How does one have the gift of Holy Fear? It is given in Confirmation and it is strengthened by asking for the grace to use it. It is a gift that makes you sing in God's presence because you know how extraordinary the opportunity is for you to participate in the life of God. Without it, faith gets boring and tiresome. With it, faith is alive and transforming. You don't want to enter His presence without being converted and transformed and healed.

There is good reason and scary reason to fear the Lord. One is that He is the Judge and burns chaff, the leftovers in the Kingdom, who have done nothing for the Kingdom. They have simply lived along side of the wheat. That is good reason to make sure we are producing fruit for the Kingdom. I was thinking recently, I believe on the feast of St Francis Xavier (a man who baptized between 40,000 and 100,000 people), have I ever repented for not evangelizing? The answer is no, I have not. I haven't even thought of that as important. But the Church calls it her mission to evangelize so that means it is my mission and I have not done it, and most times I do not even think I should do it. Unlike St Paul who said, "Whoa is me if I do not proclaim the Gospel." If I feared God, I would share the Gospel in the way I am able. I would want others to share salvation. Without Fear of the Lord, I will not share the Gospel because I will think that there no final judgement and why should I fear something that is not going to happen. However, we have been told to the contrary by God, who does not lie, that there will be so, yes, I have to repent for not evangelizing. It is now one of my daily prayers. *Lord, help me to evangelize. Help me to have the courage to evangelize, Lord. Help me to desire to evangelize because You have told us all to do that and if I fear You, I must know that you have a reason for commanding such things. So yes, I want to*

fear You and do what You have told me to do. Have you every heard God commanding something and then said, "Just kidding?" No, it hasn't happened yet.

It seems like the one thing we lost after Vatican II is the fear of God. I know there is an unhealthy fear of God but there is also a healthy and freeing fear of God that gives one quick judgement and guidance on how to live one's life. If God has said it, then we should do it. If we can't, we should pray for the grace to do it. God is not like a failed legal system that doesn't know what they are talking about or know the difference between good and evil. No, He knows all. Fearing Him acknowledges that He knows and we don't know better. That is wisdom. That is why the Fear of the Lord leads to wisdom. If we feared God, we would not condemn our souls with sacrilegious Communion, that is receiving Communion in the state of mortal sin. *I can see, Lord, why your delight is in the Fear of the Lord because the soul who fears you is a soul who is free to truly delight in all You have promised.* A soul that knows good and evil and has the grace to avoid death. Let us take time to repent and to fear God so our hearts can be free to enjoy all He is and has done, so that our hearts can avoid things that lead to death and embrace that which leads to life.