

THE TRANSFORMATIVE Power of Hope

A few months ago, my student who is currently in his internship consulted me about how he is going to help his clients. During our conversation, he shared a story about a mother he had met who was struggling to provide for her children. Despite her challenges, the mother held onto hope, often telling her kids, “We can get through this together.” That student was inspired by the woman’s resilience and decided to take action to support individuals and families like her. This experience taught him the profound impact of seeing the potential in others and how hope can spark transformation.

The readings for today resonate deeply with this theme of hope, vision, and the transformative power of faith. In our First Reading, the Prophet Isaiah speaks of a future where the deaf will hear and the blind will see. This is not just about physical healing; it reflects a deeper spiritual awakening. The prophet assures us that God will overturn the darkness that clouds our understanding, revealing his plan and purpose for us. It is a powerful reminder that, even in our most difficult moments, God is at work, preparing a way for us to see beyond our current struggles.

In our Gospel for today, St. Matthew illustrates this theme in a profound way. The two blind men who approach Jesus embody a deep faith, crying out for mercy. Their persistent belief that Jesus can heal them is remarkable. When Jesus asks if they believe

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he can do this, their response is a confident “Yes, Lord.” This affirmation of faith is crucial; it highlights that seeing is not merely a matter of physical sight but involves a deeper spiritual vision. When Jesus touches their eyes, their sight is restored, illustrating the transformative power of faith and

the willingness to see the world through God’s eyes.

This is where our work as a social worker reflects this dynamic beautifully. We did not just see the struggles of the families we serve; we saw their potential and strength. By fostering hope in our community, we helped others find their voice and reclaim their dignity. Like the blind men in the Gospel, we chose to believe in the possibility of change, which in turn became a catalyst for healing.

As we reflect on these readings today, let us consider how we can cultivate a vision of hope in our own lives and communities. Are there areas where we feel spiritually blind, struggling to see God’s presence? Can we, like my student, take action to uplift those around us, helping them to see their own worth and potential?

In this season of Advent, let us embrace the light that God offers, trusting that our faith can restore sight to the blind and bring hope to the hopeless. Together with the Psalmist, we can acclaim “that the Lord is my light and my salvation.” In a world filled with uncertainty and fear, we are reminded that God provides the illumination we need to navigate our lives. The psalmist encourages us to seek God’s presence and to trust that, even when we face challenges, we can remain hopeful. May we be instruments of his love, helping others to see the beauty of God’s plan and the promise of new beginnings. Together, let us wait on the Lord, confident that his light will guide us through the darkness, illuminating the path ahead.

THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon

(Ps 33 [32]:11, 19)

(Recited when there is no opening song.)

The designs of his Heart are from age to age, to rescue their souls from death and to keep them alive in famine.

Greeting

(The sign of the cross is made here.)

P—The Lord be with you.

All—And with your spirit.

Introduction

(These [or similar words] may be used to address the assembly.)

P—The season of Advent is a period of preparation for the Lord's coming. When the Lord comes to visit his people, he saves them from all their oppression. The prophet Isaiah pictures the Lord's salvation as a time of healing and deliverance. Today's Gospel story tells us that, in Jesus, the ancient prophecy of Isaiah is now fulfilled.

Penitential Act

P—Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.
(Pause)

P—You were sent to heal the contrite of heart: Lord, have mercy.

All—Lord, have mercy.

P—You came to call sinners: Christ, have mercy.

All—Christ, have mercy.

P—You are seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us: Lord, have mercy.

All—Lord, have mercy.

P—May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

All—Amen.

Collect

P—Let us pray. *(Pause)*

Clothe us, Lord God, with the virtues of the Heart of your Son

and set us aflame with his love, that conformed to his image, we may merit a share in eternal redemption.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

All—Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD



First Reading (Is 29:17–24) *(Sit)*

To the people broken and oppressed by tyrants, Isaiah announces the good news of God's visitation. This salvation is pictured as a complete healing of the land and of the people.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

THUS SAYS the Lord GOD: But a very little while, and Lebanon shall be changed into an orchard, and the orchard be regarded as a forest! On that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book; and out of gloom and darkness, the eyes of the blind shall see. The lowly will ever find joy in the LORD, and the poor rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. For the tyrant will be no more and the arrogant will have gone; all who are alert to do evil will be cut off, those whose mere word condemns a man, who ensnare his defender at the gate, and leave the just man with an empty claim. Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of the house of Jacob, who redeemed Abraham: Now Jacob shall have nothing to be ashamed of, nor shall his face grow pale. When his children see the work of my hands in his midst, they shall keep my name holy; they shall reverence the Holy One of Jacob, and be in awe of the God of Israel. Those who err in spirit shall acquire understanding, and those who find fault shall receive instruction.

—The word of the Lord.

All—Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm (Ps 27)

R—The Lord is my light and my salvation.

1. The LORD is my light and my salvation;/ whom should I fear?/ The LORD is my life's refuge;/ of whom should I be afraid?(**R**)

2. One thing I ask of the LORD; this I seek:/ to dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,/ that I may gaze on the loveliness of the LORD/ and contemplate his temple. (**R**)

3. I believe that I shall see the bounty of the LORD/ in the land of the living./ Wait for the LORD with courage;/ be stouthearted, and wait for the LORD. (**R**)

Verse before the Gospel *(Stand)*

All—Alleluia, alleluia. Behold, our Lord shall come with power; he will enlighten the eyes of his servants. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel (Mt 9:27–31)

P—A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew
All—Glory to you, O Lord.

AS JESUS passed by, two blind men followed him, crying out, "Son of David, have pity on us!" When he entered the house, the blind men approached him and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I can do this?" "Yes, Lord," they said to him. Then he touched their eyes and said, "Let it be done for you according to your faith." And their eyes were opened. Jesus warned them sternly, "See that no one knows about this." But they went out and spread word of him through all that land.

—The Gospel of the Lord.

All—Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily *(Sit)*

Prayer of the Faithful

P—Let us ask the Lord to open our eyes that we may see clearly the path that leads to his Kingdom, and to judge wisely the things of earth and to hold firm to the things of heaven. For every petition, we say:

R—Lord, hear our prayer.

C—We pray, Lord, for our Church and civil leaders. May they have eyes and ears for the needs and supplications of your people, especially of the poor and those who suffer injustice. We pray: **(R)**

C—We bring before you, Lord, those who are suffering much pain and discomfort. In your grace and mercy, raise them back into full health and strength. We pray: **(R)**

C—Lord, come into our lives and heal our blindness of unbelief. May we turn away from sin and trust in you, our Savior. We pray: **(R)**

C—Lord, we thank you for this beautiful life. Forgive us if sometimes it seems that we do not love it enough, and so fail to praise you. We pray: **(R)**

C—Lord, heal in us our wounds and our weaknesses. Heal our memory, emotions, spirit, and soul. We pray: **(R)**

C—Let us pray for the urgent concerns of our community and our personal intentions *(pause)*. We pray: **(R)**

P—Lord our God, bless us with a clear conscience and blameless conduct. May we be found worthy on the day of Christ Jesus, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
All—Amen.

LITURGY OF
THE EUCHARIST

Presentation of the Gifts *(Stand)*

P—Pray, brethren...
All—May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings

P—O God, Father of mercies, who because of the great love with which you loved us, with untold goodness gave us your Only Begotten Son, grant, we pray, that, being perfectly united with him, we may offer you worthy homage.

Through Christ our Lord.
All—Amen.

Preface II *(The Boundless Charity of Christ)*

P—The Lord be with you.
All—And with your spirit.
P—Lift up your hearts.
All—We lift them up to the Lord.

P—Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
All—It is right and just.

P—It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord.

For raised up high on the Cross, he gave himself up for us with a wonderful love and poured out blood and water from his pierced side, the wellspring of the Church's Sacraments, so that, won over to the open heart of the Savior, all might draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.

And so, with all the Angels and Saints, we praise you, as without end we acclaim:
All—Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. (Kneel)

Acclamation *(Stand)*

All—We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord's Prayer

All—Our Father...
P—Deliver us, Lord...
All—For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever.

Invitation to Peace

Invitation to Communion *(Kneel)*

P—Behold the Lamb of God...
All—Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon *(Cf. Jn 19:34)*

One of the soldiers opened his side with a lance, and at once there came forth blood and water.

Prayer after Communion *(Stand)*

P—Let us pray. *(Pause)*
Made partakers in your Sacrament of charity, we humbly implore your mercy, Lord, that we may be conformed to Christ on earth and merit to be coheirs of his glory in heaven.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
All—Amen.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

P—The Lord be with you.
All—And with your spirit.

Prayer over the People

P—Bow for the blessing. *(Pause)*
May the almighty and merciful God, by whose grace you have placed your faith in the First Coming of his Only Begotten Son and yearn for his coming again, sanctify you by the radiance of Christ's Advent and enrich you with his blessing.
All—Amen.

P—As you run the race of this present life, may he make you firm in faith, joyful in hope, and active in charity.
All—Amen.

P—So that, rejoicing now with devotion at the Redeemer's coming in the flesh, you may be endowed with the rich reward of eternal life when he comes again in majesty.
All—Amen.

P—And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, and the Son, (†) and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.
All—Amen.

Dismissal

P—Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.
All—Thanks be to God.



PRAYER TO THE SACRED HEART *of Jesus*

Divine Jesus, you have said, "Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," behold me kneeling at your feet, filled with a lively faith and confidence in the promises dictated by your Sacred Heart and pronounced by your adorable lips. I come to ask this favor: *(Here silently mention your petition/s).*

To whom can I turn to if not to you whose Heart is the source of all graces and merits? Where should I seek if not in the treasure which contains all the riches of your kindness and mercy? Where should I knock if not at the door through which God gives himself to us and through which we go to God? I have recourse to you, Heart of Jesus. In you I find consolation when afflicted,

protection when persecuted, strength when burdened with trials, and light in doubt and darkness.

Dear Jesus, I firmly believe that you can grant me the grace I implore, even though it should require a miracle. You have only to will it, and my prayer will be granted. I admit that I am most unworthy of your favors, but this is not a reason for me to be discouraged. You are the God of mercy and you will not refuse a contrite heart. Cast upon me a look of mercy, I beg of you, and your kind Heart will find in my miseries and weaknesses a reason for granting my prayers.

O Sacred Heart, whatever may be your decision with regard to my request, I will never stop adoring, loving, praising and serving you. My Jesus, be pleased to accept this my act of perfect resignation to the decrees of your adorable Heart which I sincerely desire may be fulfilled in and by me and all your creatures forever.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I know that there is but one thing impossible to you: to be without pity for those who are suffering or in distress. Look upon me, I beg of you, dear Jesus, and grant me the grace for which I humbly implore you through the Immaculate Heart of your most sorrowful Mother. You have entrusted me to her as her child, and her prayers are all-powerful with you. Amen.

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