

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Dec 14th 2016

Memorial of Saint John of the Cross, Priest and Doctor of the Church

“For thus says the LORD, the creator of the heavens, who is God, the designer and maker of the earth, who established it, not creating it to be a waste, but designing it to be lived in: I am the Lord, and there is no other”(Is 45:18).

In Advent we seek a heightened sensitivity to God’s presence in our lives. Our primary invitation from God is to a heightened awareness of Jesus Christ -- the Word of God sent by the Father to be our savior. The responsorial psalm presents this dimension eloquently: “Let the clouds rain down the Just One, and the earth bring forth a Savior” (Is 48:8). And so we ask ourselves: How is God inviting us to open our hearts further to allow the Father to “rain down” our savior?

Listen to Jesus’ response to John’s disciples: “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.” This miracle-working Jesus can also heal the restlessness of our hearts. We pray: Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus! Heal the restlessness of our hearts! Recall *adventus* is the Latin word for “coming”!

But in Advent we also seek a heightened sensitivity to God’s presence in creation. In his encyclical *Laudato Si* Pope Francis reminds us of a truth we tend to forget: God is the designer and maker of the earth; and God created it for us to be lived in and cherished: “The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God” (#84).

And the pope invites us to contemplate God’s creation: “This contemplation of creation allows us to discover in each thing a teaching God wishes to hand on to us. . . . We can say that alongside revelation properly so-called, contained in Scripture, there is a divine manifestation in the blaze of the sun and the fall of night “(#85). And so we ask: How do we personally experience God’s “caressing” us in the blaze of the sun and the fall of night? Have we adequately acknowledged that being drawn to the created beauty of oceans, mountains, sky, stars, lakes and woods is being drawn to their Creator?

Yes, we are invited to be open to God’s presence in the simplicity of the manger scene as well as in the silence and grandeur of the starry, starry night!

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