

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Dec 22nd 2017

“He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty.” Luke

This is a reflection on “empty” and “full” – how important it is to create empty space in our lives during this crazy season for God to fill us with satisfaction.

Picture a piece of pecan pie covered in whipped cream – a sweet lover’s dream unless consumed after a heavy Thanksgiving dinner.

“Ouch,” said my tummy. “You’ve already overloaded me. Why didn’t you have sense enough to stop eating when I told you I was full?” Of course I had ignored the message.

Two bites in, I wished I was still hungry enough to enjoy the surplus calories. Full/satisfied turned to empty of satisfaction.

This seems like a symbol of how, too often, we experience the Christmas season, something today’s gospel warns us against, when Mary tells us that God “has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty.”

Theoretically we are still in the austere season of Advent but church is practically the only place where we can get relief from the unrelenting pressure to consume, consume, consume past the point that we even enjoy it.

Just how many goods do we need before we become so full that God sends us away “empty” like the biblical rich? If we leave no empty room in our lives for God to fill, aren’t we like my overloaded tummy on Thanksgiving?

The amount of goods per se that each of us has isn’t the issue. It’s our understanding that consuming alone will leave us feeling empty.

Ask yourself what DOES make you happy. Is it buying three more sweaters that your daughter doesn’t need even if they were on sale? Is it feeling guilty because a grade school friend just sent you a card and she wasn’t on your list?

If we are feeling “empty” because we are over-filled with too much shopping or too many parties or simply “TOO MUCH,” we can set aside time to open ourselves to God. We can visit our church which is quiet and still not decorated for Christmas. We can meditate on the coming of our Savior who teaches us to die to ourselves in order that we might live with him. How will this change our lives and our priorities going forward?

Try to create empty space in our lives that God can fill. We can give ourselves the greatest gift of the season – peaceful time to prepare for the coming of the Lord. Then on Christmas Eve, we will rejoice in the fullness of the season – but let’s go easy on the pecan pie!

Merry Christmas!

O King of all nations and keystone of the Church:

Come and save man, whom you formed from the dust!

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