

A Word From Fr. Tom Niehaus

December 8, 2019



Believe It or Not

There are some things in life that are difficult to explain, some of them we see firsthand and others we hear about from others. I remember being in physical education class in elementary school and during a softball game watching one student hit a pop fly to left field and the ball landing at the same time a gopher came out of its hole, smacking the rodent in the head and ending its life. What are the odds of that happening? As a seminary student I remember doing an interview with a Philadelphia Area news station outside of St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City right at the moment the conclave taking place for the election of Pope Benedict was happening and the white smoke came pouring out of the smoke stack from the Sistine Chapel, indicating the new Pope was chosen. "Sorry. I got to go. Looks like we are getting a new Pope today," I said. Pretty wild to be in that place at the moment a new Pope is elected! This week's readings should open up for us a way to see God at work in amazing ways, beyond what we can fully comprehend. The Prophet Isaiah reveals to us that one from Jesse's lineage will enter into our world ushering a wondrous change so much so that, "The wolf shall be a guest of the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them. The cow and bear shall be neighbors together their young shall rest; the lion shall eat hay like the ox. The baby shall play by the cobra's den, and the child lay his hand on the adder's lair (Isaiah 11:6-8)." How wonderful that the Spirit of the Lord will come to earth and effect a radical change upon all creation. Turning everything as we know it on its head and revealing the peace and harmony that was intended to exist among all creation from the beginning of time. St. Paul states, "May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think in harmony with one another, in keeping with Christ Jesus, that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 15:5-6)." When we see the wonders of God or better yet experience a conversion of heart through an encounter with God's presence, how wondrous an action if we are motivated to want to follow the Lord for the rest of our life. St. John the Baptist had a special motivation in his life for people to be cleansed of their sins and set free to serve God. I am sure he was a sight to behold as a young man wearing rough camel hair clothes held up by a leather belt and satisfying his hunger on the locusts and

honey that could be found in the wilderness of Judaea. To behold St. John the Baptist is to behold a soul that has been fully handed over to the work of God. His message was simple, "I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one

who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matthew 3:11-12)." John reveals the truth at the heart of our lives as Christians, namely, everything we do must point to Jesus Christ. Jesus is to be first and foremost in our lives and we must do everything we can to know him, love him and serve him. There are many sights in life that cause us to pause in awe or to say, "What are the odds of that happening?" But what if that most wondrous sight to be seen this Advent, is you and me being open to the life of Christ and being so moved by him that our hearts are completely taken by his love to the point we give up everything in order to serve him and tell others about the transforming love we have received? Now that would be a sight to behold! Pray for the grace to receive the love of Christ deep in your heart and to share that received love with others.

Advent Encouragement

Take time during this Advent Season to slow your life down for a little 10 minute prayer time before or after the day. What do I do for 10 minutes? Take some time to thank God. Take some time to praise God for the wonders He has done. Take some time to pray to God for others in your life. Take some time to pray to God for the help you need to get through the week. Take some time to say to God, "I love you." If you have not been to the Sacrament of Confession for a while, I would encourage you to make time to be healed and forgiven at any one of the times of Confession offered in our area parishes before the Solemnity of Christmas. If none of the times listed works for you, feel free to set up an appointment with me or Fr. George Grafsky.

Advent Blessings!

Fr. Tom Niehaus