

**Second Sunday of Advent — 2018 C
Homily by Rev. Bob Schramm, OSFS**

**There is something in us that wants to tame Advent and Christmas,
to sentimentalize it all.**

**We like cute manger scenes —
scenes of adoring parents and shepherds and wise men;
scenes of angels singing comforting songs;
scenes of lovely pastoral settings.
It's all so very nice.**

**I said last week that Advent is about schooling us
in waiting and patience and expecting joyfully.
Another way of putting that is to say that Advent is meant
to school us in hope.**

**We just heard . . .
God commands that "every lofty mountain be made low
and the ancient depths and gorges be filled in."
We heard that God is leading Israel (that's us!) "by the light of glory,
accompanied by mercy and right order."
There IS reason to hope.**

**We just heard St. Paul say
". . . I am confident that the one who began the good work in you
will bring it to completion."
There IS reason to hope.**

**We just heard that "the word of God came . . ."
not to Tiberius Caesar or Pontius Pilate or the Herods
or Philip or Lysanias
or Annas or Caiaphas,
but to some no-count in the desert named John,
And there is reason for hope.**

**The real focus of our Christian Advent and Christmas celebration
is not nativity, it is incarnation.**

**Nativity is what the culture celebrates this time of year:
the birth of babies and good times;
the growth and gathering of family and friends;
of creches and gifts.**

**There is something very good about the culture's celebration of nativity.
It can school us in God's unreasonable, embarrassing,
effusive, lavish love for humankind.**

**But, our Christian celebration of incarnation
is really something quite different.**

The Church's liturgy, in this sacred season, is a dare.
It's a dare to believe in the in-breaking of God into human life.
It's a dare to believe that God has disappeared into humankind
and that God is found nowhere else than in the radical call
to justice and love.

God's rule means that the Holy one has chosen
relatedness to human beings
as the definition of the Divine.

To be schooled about the true meaning of INCARNATION
it doesn't help to spend much time imagining the circumstances
of that birth that happened a couple thousand years ago.

It has more to do with how life – the Savior's life – is happening,
is being birthed today.

I saw a news story the other day about the manger scene
at St. Suzanne Parish in Dedham, Mass.

(Description of manger scene: the child in a cage,
with magi separated from the child by a wall.)

That scene unsettled a lot of folks.

It is a political statement, but it is also a profound theological statement.

It's another way of schooling us in the meaning of Incarnation,
in what it means to hope.

Brendan Graham, an Irish poet and lyricist,
penned some words that sum up a bit of it nicely:

When I am down and, oh, my soul, so weary;
When troubles come and my heart burdened be;
Then I am still and wait here in the silence,
Until you come and sit awhile with me.

You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains;
You raise me up to walk on stormy seas;
I am strong when I am on your shoulders;
You raise me up to more than I can be.

There is no life without its hunger;
Each restless heart beats so imperfectly;
But when you come and I am filled with wonder,
Sometimes, I think I glimpse eternity.

You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains;
You raise me up to walk on stormy seas;
I am strong when I am on your shoulders;
You raise me up to more than I can be.
You raise me up to more than I can be.

So, we are invited back to school this week to be schooled in the importance of waiting and patience, of expecting joyfully . . . in hope. Today is "Human Rights Day" — 70th Anniversary of Universal Declaration of Human Rights