

Second Sunday of Advent (C)
December 6, 2009

What's holding us back?

What's keeping us from welcoming Christ into our hearts and into our daily lives...our work...our school...our home?

What are we holding onto that we can't let go?

There's a story of a mountain climber who had it as his goal to climb the highest mountain...and he wanted to do this alone.

He was well on his way to nearing the top.

But, as it was getting colder and darker with zero visibility around him, his footing slipped and fell.

He fell through the air for what seemed like a few minutes.

And as he fell, his life flashed before his eyes and he saw various parts of his life – both the good and the bad.

Suddenly, he stopped falling as the rope around him caught on something...another rock perhaps or a tree limb he thought.

Either way, he was relieved for a second.

Then he realized that even though he stopped falling, he was stranded and hanging on solely by his rope.

Out of fear and desperation, he called out, "Help me God!"

After a few minutes of shouting this out, he stopped yelling and began to cry thinking that this was it...this was the end.

Finally, after a minute or two of silence, God spoke to him and asked,
“Yes, my son? What would you like?”

Of course the mountain climber said hastily, “Please, save me!”

At which God responded and asked him if he really and truly believed
that God could save him and bring him to safety.

The man immediately replied yes and proceeded to beg God to help
him and save him.

God said to the mountain climber, “Alright then, cut the rope and you
will be saved.”

“What?! Are you crazy?! I’m not cutting the rope! I’ll fall and die if I
do that!” the man responded as he held onto the rope more
tightly...not showing signs of ever letting go.

“If you trust me and want me to save you, you’ll cut the rope. If you
don’t, you’ll die,” God responded.

After that, the man was silent and never did cut the rope.

When daylight came, a search party found the mountain climber,
clinging tightly to the rope, frozen to death from the cold, and
hanging only 10 feet above the ground.

What are those things in our lives that we are desperately holding onto
and refuse to let go?

What’s holding us back from trusting in God and offering to Him
everything we are and everything we have?

God wants us to get rid of all obstacles in our lives...all those things that are prohibiting us from fully experiencing Christ in our lives.

He calls us, like St. John the Baptist, to “prepare the way of the Lord.”

We are to make paths straight.

We are to fill in every valley.

We are to lower mountains and hills.

We are to straighten winding roads.

We are to smooth out rough ways.

We are to get rid of all obstacles and all walls that impede us from welcoming God into our lives.

In other words, we are called to eliminate all things such as bitterness, judgmental-ism, harsh feelings, fear, uncertainty, selfishness, materialism, not being able to forgive another, worshiping of false gods and idols, and so forth.

We are to get rid of all this – wipe it away with the help and grace of God that we receive through prayer and in the Sacraments such as Reconciliation and the Eucharist.

And in its place, we are to welcome and put on love, forgiveness, mercy, compassion, care, self-sacrificing, receiving another with the love of Christ, and the like.

This is what God not only calls us to, but commands us.

He commands that “every lofty mountain be made low.”

And “that the age-old depths and gorges be filled to level ground.”

God commands this and wants this so that He might be able to lead and bring us to Himself by HIS light, by HIS glory, by HIS mercy, and by HIS justice.

Notice that we are not led and brought to God by OUR actions... although, what we do and say do have an impact in whether or not we are welcomed into God's presence and love.

In other words, we are responsible for our actions and our words and these things are seen as our responses to God's freely giving of Himself and His love to us.

Rather, God leads us and brings us to Himself by HIS own doing.

We cannot lead and bring ourselves to God.

However, we can prepare the way and remove any and all obstacles that prevent God from coming to us and welcoming us into His company and His kingdom.

And so, what's holding us back from doing this...

From welcoming God?

From following Christ?

From living a life that each and every one of us is called to live?

From loving, forgiving, reconciling, giving, and receiving?

What are the obstacles that we must get rid of...the rope that we must let go of...to more fully and completely experience the love of Christ Jesus in our hearts and in our lives this Advent Season?

May we be eager to get rid of these so that God, "who began the good work in us will continue to complete it and bring it to fulfillment."