

Cycle B 1st Sunday of Advent
Sunday December 3rd, 2017

“You Lord are our Father, our redeemer you are named forever.” These words of praise are spoken by the prophet when the people of Israel are returning to the promise land after the hardship of exile. The first reading continues with a range of emotions and questions expressed by the prophet on behalf of the people.

“Why do you let us wander, O Lord, from your ways, and harden our hearts so that we fear you not?”

Then a plea, **“Return for the sake of your servants the tribe of your heritage.”**

The people want to renew and restore their relationship with the Lord. As they are returning to Jerusalem they find the city and Temple in ruins. Perhaps this symbolizes how our relationship with God needs to be renewed, restored or rebuilt.

The prophet expresses words of hope for a renewed act of fidelity to the ways of God. **“Would that you might meet us doing right, that we were mindful of you in our ways.”** Here the people of Israel are expressing hope to return to doing right in the sight of God.

Then we hear words and phrases such as: **“you are angry” “we are sinful” “unclean people” “all our good deeds are like polluted rags” “we have all withered like leaves” “our guilt carries us away like the wild” “You have hidden your face from us.”**

All of these words and phrases could be cause for despair. However, when we read a little further, we are reminded of the marvelous beauty and majesty of the Lord, and that His work with us is not yet complete **“Yet O Lord, you are our father, we are the clay and you are the potter, we are all the work of your hands.”** The Lord continues to work with each and every one of us. We are all a work of **God’s** art in progress.

The season of Advent is our opportunity to once more allow the potter to reshape us for His will not ours. The word advent means **“coming”**. In this season of advent we are in preparation for the return of Jesus Christ at the end of time in all His glory, and in the latter part of advent we are preparing to welcome the birth of Jesus Christ.

Throughout the advent season we will hear from the prophets every day. The words of the prophets prepared the way for the first coming of the messiah Jesus Christ. The message of the prophets is still relevant today as we watch for the return of Jesus Christ in all His glory. In our preparation and watching we can take up similar disciplines that we experience in Lent: prayer, penance, fasting, almsgiving, confession and taking time to read the Scriptures, especially the prophets.

In this season of advent we need to allow ourselves to be shaped by **God** according to the words of the prophet Isaiah, “**we are the clay and you are the potter, we are all the work of your hands.**”