

HOMILIES FROM THE HERMITAGE: No. 38

ADVENT NO 2: Third and fourth weeks: approach to Christmas

Advent is very different from Lent: in Lent the mood becomes darker and grimmer until it reached Good Friday when it exploded into the horror of the Cross, wherein it becomes a day of Triumph, proclaimed to all on Easter Day. Advent is the opposite; we move from a period of self-reflection and renewal into Gaudete Sunday and the thrilling expectation of the octave up to Christmas itself.

The Third Sunday and some of the week moves to John the Baptist (adult) preaching repentance for the coming of the Lord. The Gospels also give us refusal to accept Jesus and the story of the two sons (the two covenants) But from 17-24 things change:

THE OCTAVE BEFORE CHRISTMAS: The Liturgy is very carefully crafted with the mood building up to Christmas Vigil. The Gospels give us the events up to the birth of Jesus: the first Readings reflect and give prophecy to the coming of the Saviour:

DATE	GOSPEL	FIRST READING
17 ^t ^h	Matt 1/17 (Genealogy)	Gen 49: Rule of Juda (David's tribe)
18	Matt 1/18-24 Gabriel/Joseph	Jeremiah 23/5-8 A virtuous Branch for David
19	Luke 1/1-25 Gabriel/Zechariah	Judges 12 Birth of Samson
20	Luke 1/26-38 Gabriel/Mary	(Isaiah) disobedience of Ahaz (not this year)
20	(<i>Mary's obedience</i>)	Samuel: the House of David (this year)
21	Luke 1/39-45 Mary/Visitation	Song of Songs 2/8-14/Zechariah 3/14-18 Joy
22	Luke 1/46-56-46 The Magnificat	Samuel 1/24 The birth of Samuel
23	Luke 1/57-66 Zechariah obeys	Malachi 3/1-4 Elijah will come (John Baptist)
24	Luke 1/67-70 Benedictus	Samuel 7/18 David's throne will stand secure

These readings are carefully crafted and juxtaposed. In Matthew the birth of Jesus gives us the genealogy and Gabriel visiting Joseph: the first readings echo the rule of Juda (David's tribe) and the virtuous branch of David—the Messiah is to be of David's line. The Luke Gospel gives readings alternatively about John the Baptist and Jesus. The first of give us the Nativity of John and the Nativity of Jesus: the doubt of Zechariah is compared by Mary's faith: the birth of John is echoed in the Old Testament of the birth of Samson. The Visitation echoes the Song of Songs. The two final Gospels give us the canticles around the birth of John and Jesus. The Magnificat (echoes the birth of Samuel): the Benedictus echoes the security of David's throne: between Zechariah obeys: John is to be the new Elijah. Elijah was to return to herald the coming of the Messiah: the coming of John to proclaim Jesus. Special acclamations proclaim on the final days of Advent the titles and reality of our Saviour.

The 'O' ANTIPHONS: Dec. 17th: O Sapientia (O Wisdom): 18th O Adonai: O Sacred Lord of ancient Israel: 19th O Radix Jesse: Flower of Jesse's stem (Jesse was the father of David): 20th O Clavis David: O Key of David: 21st: O Oriens: O Radiant Dawn: 22nd O Rex Gentium: O King of all nations: 23rd: O Emmanuel: Remember Emmanuel means God is with us. If you take the first letter of the proclamation and write it backwards it reads **E R O C R A S**: which in Latin means: **TOMORROW I SHALL COME.**