

Go Forth...

A SERVICE OF U.S. CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

ADVENT IS MISSION

SUNDAY READINGS:

Isaiah 11:1-10

Psalms: 72: 2, 7-8, 12-13, 17

Romans 15: 4-9

Matthew 3:1-12

MISSION COMMENTARY

This is the time for the hustle and bustle of getting ready for Christmas. Actually, the Christmas sales and decorations could be found on the shelves even before Thanksgiving! Perhaps like some of you, I just shook my head in dismay and thanked God that I don't have a long Christmas list. I can understand why some people want and need to take advantage of the

discounts and better prices to stretch their money. But this is the time of Advent and we await the coming of our Savior. Santa Claus is faithful to his time and we need to be faithful to our spiritual time of awaiting Jesus.

Once a week choose an appropriate time and place in your home when the family can sit together for a few minutes. (This may sound impossible, but the kids have to come home sometime before midnight!) Light a candle. If you can mount an Advent wreath that would be better. Brush the dust that may have accumulated on your Bible and read again the Gospel from Sunday. It could be in the parish bulletin or just google, "Daily Catholic Readings". Someone can read it aloud and then enjoy a bit of silence as you all ponder what the word means to you. Naturally adaptations are necessary for younger children.

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Does this sound undoable? Are you thinking of five reasons why this can't work for your family? Then I say like John the Baptist, "Repent!" Open your minds and hearts to Mary as she prepares for her Son. If the family rejects the suggestion of silence and Scripture, you can do it. Be the example of one who is seeking the Lord. Silence and prayer will lead you to our Savior and His mother.

Our mission in life is to spread God's love to all. The fire that John the Baptist spoke of can be our fire if we develop a relationship with our God. God has entrusted this mission to us and we have been baptized to equip us for this mission. Your family can be the catalyst that spreads the grace of love and mercy to all in your neighborhood. You need not go to a foreign country to be on mission. You already are on mission.

NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS:

First Reading: Isaiah 11:1-10: Surely Mary must have been thinking of this passage of Isaiah as she held her baby in her womb. She probably did not know how to explain what was happening, but her Jewish faith and having heard the Scriptures many times, knew that the spirit of the Lord rested on her child. The Spirit of the Lord rests on us, too, as the followers of Jesus. May our commitment to justice and peace guide our actions.

Responsorial Psalm - Psalm: 72: 2, 7-8, 12-13, 17: The theme of justice and peace continues in today's responsorial psalm. Each of these verses highlights a most important aspect of our practice of faith: government with justice; desire for a profound peace; the salvation of the poor; and the eternal permanence of the name of God. The world needs these values so much today.

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NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS (CONT.):

Second Reading: Romans 15: 4-9: Frequently the St. Paul speaks of hope and encouragement as the fruit of belief in Jesus the Christ. All peoples are called to embrace this hope because all are called to believe in Jesus. There are many types of Christians and many non-Christians who share this hope with us because they live the values that Jesus taught. God's love and mercy are freely given to all who seek them.

Gospel: Matthew 3:1-12: "...the one who is coming after me...will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." The importance of these words resounds to us even today. John knew that he was only to prepare the way and that repentance was needed. Our baptism unites us to the life of Jesus and the Spirit but it cannot be taken for granted. Repentance and the living of Gospel values are we must embrace so that the Fire of the Spirit can lead us through the journey of life to eternal life.

Notes and Commentary by Sr. Nancy Schramm, OSF. Sr. Nancy is a past-president of the USCMA and currently serves in a small rural parish. She also serves her religious community on various committees. She is a spiritual director and translates for other groups in Portuguese.

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