

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT, December 8, 2019

JESUS, THE REASON FOR THE SEASON

“A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse and from his roots a bud shall blossom” (Isaiah 11:1).

Dear brothers and sisters, last Sunday through the prophet Isaiah, the Holy Spirit spoke to us about a fascinating future event. “The mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established as the highest mountain and raised above the hill” (Isaiah 2:1). We deduced that the mountain of the Lord’s house was the highest, because there the Savior God Jesus Christ, was born.

This Sunday, our Readings show us the identity of the Savior God, who is the reason why we have Advent and Christmas seasons. Please join me in reflecting on the theme, “Jesus, The Reason for the Season.” The First Reading from the prophet Isaiah speaks of the human ancestry, the distinguishing characteristics and the kind of work the Shoot from the stump of Jesse will do.

Regarding his origin, Isaiah, the prophet of the Most High prophesied, “A shoot shall sprout from the

stump of Jesse and from his root a bud shall blossom” (Isaiah 11:1). This meant that the One who was “the Shoot” would be from Jesse’s lineage and by that very fact from David’s lineage since Jesse was the father of King David (1 Samuel 17:12). Who was the Shoot? The Lord answered, “I, Jesus, sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the root and offspring [or shoot] of David, the bright morning star” (Revelation 22:16).

The Prophet Isaiah described Jesse as a stump, because Babylonian exile had mercilessly lopped off the branches and stems of the family tree of the house of David by carrying off the most healthy young men and women to the land of Babylon as captives in the year 586 BC.

Dear brothers and sisters, nobody can stop God’s plan of salvation. Though, a vast majority of the people of the lineage of David had suffered the misfortune of slavery and captivity, they still blossomed and flourished. God still raised the Savior of the world from that tree which had been reduced to a stump. The Shoot that blossomed from there is not just one among many. He is the anointed One, the Messiah.

He has the fullness of God's spirit. The Scripture passage we read described Him as follows: "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and strength, a spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:2).

The Evangelist helps us to understand that Jesus is the One being referred to in the aforementioned prophecy. This is evident, among other things, in the account of the Annunciation, Baptism and first preaching of our Lord in the synagogue. During the Annunciation, for instance, the Angel Gabriel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). This declaration presents Mary as the Ark of the Covenant and the child in her womb as the Mercy seat, the place of God's presence (Exodus 25:22, Romans 3:25).

The baptismal account of our Lord is even more vivid in portraying Jesus as the abode of the Holy Spirit – "After Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in a bodily form like a dove (Luke 3:21-

22).The presence of a dove alludes to the end of the deluge and a beginning of a new life. Through the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah, the Holy Spirit confirmed that Jesus was the anointed One. “For a child is born to us, a Son is given to us... They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:5-6). In Jesus the Shoot from the stump of Jesse, our Lord and Master, is found “the key, the center and the purpose of the whole human history”(Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes* 10§ 3).This brings us to the work and mission of the Messiah as detailed in the passage from Isaiah chapter 11. “He shall not judge by appearance” or hearsay, because as God he sees the heart. “Justice shall flourish in his time and fullness of peace forever” (Psalm 72:7). He is the all-knowing and all-loving. “He shall strike the ruthless with the rod of his mouth” (Isaiah 11:4), because “the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart” (Hebrew 4:12). “Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat; The calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide

them” (Isaiah 11:5-6). This means that the chaos, conflict, confusion, disharmony and sin brought about by man’s disobedience would be undone by the work of Christ. As often as men follow the teaching of Christ, light shines and peace reigns in our world.

So that we may not be in doubt of the reason for the season, John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah dressed in a Camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist (Matthew 3:4) to signify that Elijah has returned and that the Messiah was at the door. How can we welcome Him and let Him be the highest mountain in our lives? John tells us in a very simple and disarming way, “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Produce good fruit as the evidence of your repentance” (Matthew 3:2, 8).

Fruits of repentance necessarily entail corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Helping to renovate our aging facility here at St Augustine so that we may continue the evangelizing mission of the Church will be a step in the right direction. Why? Because the mission of the Church entails offering right worship to God, feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, and the home bound, educating and counseling the doubtful,

burying the dead along with other acts of mercy and kindness. Being part of this means that like John the Baptist, we are helping the world to see its Messiah. We are thus shouting it from the roof-top: that Jesus is the Reason for the Season.