

2 Advent A

December 4, 2022

St. Patrick

“On that day”—so starts the extravagant vision in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah—**“On that day the calf and the lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them.”** Oh, an ideal peace, as it was in the Garden of Eden!

Fifty years ago I spent the summer as a deacon serving in a very small town in the East African nation of Kenya, the town called Ahero. (As an aside, I knew that I’d never come across a person who even knew there was a town called Ahero. Then, in the first three months here at St. Patrick’s, talking with parishioner Stephen Juma, he told me that he was born and raised in a town 15 miles from Ahero! A small world indeed!)

At the end of my stay, the pastor, Father Kuntner, took the African priest in the parish and me to the famous Masai national park, more than 500 square miles of a wild animal refuge.

At dusk, not far from the park’s entrance, Father Kuntner was driving on a dirt road after a hard rain. His Volkswagen got stuck in the mud. Father Dominic and I got out and pushed the car from the rear. The wheels spun, as Father Kuntner accelerated. We kept at it for the longest, the dusk edging toward dark. Finally, with mud all over us as we kept pushing the car, it came out. Once we arrived at the lodge, Father Kuntner told us that, if we hadn’t gotten the car out of the mud and we had to stay there for the night...well, no doubt wild animals would come out from the woods, rip open the Volkswagen, and have a late night snack.

The next two days we saw lions, elephants, zebras, hippos and giraffes. (We saw two male giraffes fighting over a female. If you want to find out how they did so, ask me outside of Mass!) One early morning we drove through the park. At one point we came upon a huge lion, sprawled out lazily under a tree. Father Kuntner parked the car rather close—the lion about the distance I am from the baptismal font. He told us that the lion was resting after eating its morning kill; otherwise, he would have made us his breakfast.

In the span of three days, I came close to becoming a late night snack and an early morning breakfast!

“On that day...the calf and the lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them.” Such an idyllic harmony!

What about us? As Christmas draws near, do we find ourselves growling at one another, snipping at another’s heart, and chewing on another’s soft spot?

Advent is all about hope. As the Apostle Paul encouraged the Roman church, **“so that we might have hope.”** You see, there was dissension, folks angry with one another, relationships ripped apart in discord.

We can’t do anything about **“wolves living with lambs.”** What can we do about reconciliation, making peace—at least trying to soothe another’s, and our own—hurt? Yes, Advent is about hope.

As John the Baptist bellows out this Advent: **“Bear fruit worthy of repentance!”**

In the last years of the 1400s Leonardo Da Vinci painted his most famous mural, “The Last Supper.” In the course of the three years it took him to paint the scene, Da Vinci had a horrible fight with someone. Afterwards, returning to his studio, he picked up his paint brush and was prepared to paint the face of Jesus. To his alarm Da Vinci was unable to make a single decent stroke of the brush. Eventually he put down the brush, found the man with whom he had fought, and asked for forgiveness. Only then Da Vinci resumed painting the face of Jesus for his masterpiece, “The Last Supper.” (1)

St. Patrick’s, that day when animals will mix amicably with one another—that’ll happen at the end of time. But Advent is about *us, now!* Leonardo da Vinci couldn’t paint the face of Jesus until he said, “I’m sorry,” and did his part toward reconciliation. This Christmas, we won’t be able truly to radiate that joy of Jesus’ face if hurt and resentment have any hold on our heart.

St. Paul put it clearly: **“Welcome one another, just as Christ has welcomed you.”** Then, hope will welcome us.

(1) Mark Link, S.J., Action 2000: Praying Scripture in a Contemporary Way (Allen, Texas: Thomas More, 1994), pg. 20.

General Intercessions

Second Sunday of Advent

December 4, 2022

N.B. The reader introduces the Intercessions by saying, “The response after each petition is, “Come, Lord Jesus!”

**Grace us, your church, with healing and hope this Advent;
we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Fill our worship with joyful praise, fervent prayer for the world,
and genuine welcoming of one another; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Bring reconciliation and justice within our nation, world, and
church; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Comfort and heal those who suffer scars from the pandemic;
we pray to you, O Lord—**

**On this weekend of the St. Jude Run, be with the children and
teenagers at the hospital, their parents and families, and all the
caregivers—make St. Jude’s an oasis of recovery and hope;
we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Raise to new life all who have died with their hope fixed on Jesus,
especially Jerry Bettice and Mark Meadows;
we pray to you, O Lord—**

