

2nd Sunday of Advent, Year C

Fr. Samuel Springuel

8 December, 2024

1st Reading Baruch 5:1–9

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 126:1–2,2–3,4–5,6

2nd Reading Philippians 1:4–6,8–11

Gospel Luke 3:1–6

“The Lord has done great things for us.” Thus we proclaimed in our responsorial psalm today. “The Lord has done great things for us.” What “great things?” Do we remember what the Lord has done?

Most of us would probably say “yes, we remember,” without a second thought. We can easily name the big three of the “great things” that the Lord has done: the Incarnation, the Passion, the Resurrection. If pressed, we can probably even come up with a few more by ticking off some of the events from the Old Testament or the major feasts on the Church calendar. Indeed, one could say that’s the point of the Church calendar: to remind us of these great things on a regular basis so that we don’t forget them. Knowing the Church calendar, however, is not what the psalmist has in mind when he has us sing, “The Lord has done great things for us.” Even if we were to memorize the entire Church calendar, the psalmist would not be satisfied. He is not out to simply have us acknowledge those great things, to behave as if being able to list them is worth some sort of prize in an eternal trivia contest.

So, what does the psalmist want? Well he goes on to say, to have us say, “we are filled with joy.” Not only do we know these great things, but we remember them in such a way that they evoke an emotional reaction. They have meaning to us in a visceral way. The feasts of the Church calendar don’t exist on their own, but rather are an expression of liturgy, public worship, in which we engage in anamnesis, memorial sacrifice, in order to make present the events which we commemorate. We are called to realize that these events are not simply something which God has done in the past, something which our ancestors experienced and which set the stage for our circumstances, but rather something which God is doing now, something *we* experience and in which we partake each and every time we come together in liturgy.

We are called to remember in the sense that re-member is the opposite of dis-member. We are not to dismember the liturgical act into a series of feasts with fixed observances which are connected to each other by their relative positions on the calendar and not much else. Rather we are to re-member the events we commemorate so that their repeated observance puts back together the great

things the Lord has done in *our* lives. When we truly engage with the liturgical feasts, our lives are no longer our own. It is not we who live, but Christ who lives in us.

“The Lord has done great things for us, we are filled with joy.” Advent has a unique place in the process the psalmist is asking us to engage in. It is a new beginning, a going back to the start of the process of re-membering, but also a look ahead, a reminder of the end towards which this process leads. God humbled himself to share in our humanity so that we might come to share in his Divinity. Christ came to Earth at Bethlehem, he *comes* to Earth today, to draw us to himself in the glory of heaven, the presence of God the Most High, the eternal joy without which eternal life would be a mere shadow of existence, a true Hell. We proclaim “The Lord has done great things for us, we are filled with joy,” to remember where we have been and point towards where we are going.