

Wednesday Homily

December 17, 2008

Matthew 11:1-17

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

“Are you the one or should we look for another?” Even at this point is it possible that John has doubt about Jesus? He has seemed so sure that this man is “The Lamb of God, who will take away the sin of the world.” The Lamb of God, God’s anointed one, the Messiah.

If John has doubts, what would he need to convince him? Words won’t do it. John, and the people of Israel, have heard all there is to hear of promises, promises broken time after time. Centuries of “yes” that really meant “no.”

Jesus does not say yes or no; as Jesus tells John’s disciples, “Look around you, see what is happening. The blind see, the deaf hear, the lame dance, and the mute can sing. Does that mean anything to you?”

It’s from the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah speaks of restoration, restoration of the people of Israel after a long, long period of physical exile, captives in the land of Babylon. There will come a day when that exile will be over, the people restored to Zion, their spiritual home. It has been a long, long time. There will come a time when sadness will turn to joy, and the very earth will rejoice, flowers blossoming in the hard rock of the desert.

In Jesus' time the people of Israel were exiled once again: a spiritual exile, not in Babylon but in their own land, captives of a faith that had become dry routine, estranged from the immediacy of God. John, and others, look with longing for a second restoration, a second return to their ancient relationship with God. They look with longing for a Messiah, an anointed one of God, to lead them, not through a physical wilderness of rock and sand, but through a spiritual wilderness of dull, dead religious routine, to restore them to the joyous faith of a people and a world made young again. They look for a blossoming in the desert that is their hearts.

The signs are there; Jesus invites John, and others, and you and me, to draw their own conclusions.

In His Holy Name.