

Have you ever had one of those days when everything goes wrong? Some people have those days every day. I nearly launched into one this week. I had several appointments in Kansas City one day. I thought if I was in my car here at 7:15 a.m., I could be on time for everything. I got in the car at 7:15, put the key in the ignition, the engine coughed once and stopped. It was not a good way to start a long day. Thanks be to God after a few more tries it got going, but sometimes it seems like one thing leads to another. I forget to figure in how much traffic there is at that hour of the day, or that I don't have enough gas to do everything on my list, or the distances are farther than I thought. Everything turned out fine that day but sometimes the things that go wrong around us cause things to go wrong inside us. People can lose their temper over matters that seem completely minor. They say hurtful words to people they love. They're not really that angry at that person, but a number of other things have gone wrong that cause them to snap inappropriately. The stresses of life can also take away our virtues. We yearn for peace of mind.

Advent captures that yearning. It recalls how the prophets of old yearned for the coming of a Savior. And it captures our yearning for Christ to come again. That yearning comes to us especially when things don't go the way we wish they would. The car won't start, the kid is sick, a friend won't talk to you, a job is lost, the crops weren't good, and we wish things were going a different way. We yearn for a savior.

The refrain to today's responsorial psalm is a prayer that God will make things better: "Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation." The verses of this psalm mention the earth so much that we think it was written during a time of drought. In those days people grew the food they needed to live on, so drought didn't merely represent poverty, it could mean death. This is the same threat Fr. Melchior described for us in his letter from Tanzania last week. Imagine if we did not have grocery stores here, but you had to live on whatever you could grow in your yard. I wouldn't survive the afternoon. If we didn't get enough rain, this problem around us would cause stress inside us. We would become angry, disturbed, greedy and worried. We would experience a drought of virtues.

Today's psalm is a prophecy that God will bring a double healing: God will restore virtue to people's broken lives, and God will make the crops grow. Listen to these verses again: "Kindness and truth shall meet; justice and peace shall kiss. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and justice shall look down from heaven. The Lord himself will give his benefits; our land shall yield its increase." People who were stressed out will receive these virtues again, and the land will increase its crops. We pray for this while we sing, "Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation."

During Advent we await the salvation of God, the salvation that comes as a person, a Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord. When things go wrong, and we find our emotions churning within us, we need a savior, we need Christ, who will come to us when we pray.