

The city of Cameron has achieved a lot lately. A few months ago the city won the First Place Community Betterment Award in the State of Missouri. Farms in the area have reaped large harvests. The high school football team took second place in the State, and first place in the hearts of this town. Next year Cameron will celebrate its 150th anniversary. The activities will begin with St. Patrick's Day. I want you to be the first to know that we will have two special visitors here that day: Our coadjutor Bishop, Robert Finn, and a priest from St. Munchin Church. Father Michael O'Shea works at St. Munchin Church in Limerick, Ireland, and he will spend several weeks with us in March of 2005.

Cameron has achieved a lot. In some ways it resembles Jerusalem in today's first reading. We begin Advent this year with Isaiah's prophecy about a relatively small town. Isaiah lived in the early 700s BC. He was married and had several children. His book is the longest one by a prophet in the Old Testament. He came from Jerusalem.

Jerusalem sits on a hill, but it is not a high hill. Isaiah calls it a mountain, but that's like calling Cedar (*Water*) Street a highway. It's one of the scrawniest mountains you'll ever see. Jerusalem did not look like a winner. You wouldn't expect it to be the leader of the free world.

But Isaiah says, "In days to come, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest mountain and raised above the hills." Isaiah thinks the very earth will lift Jerusalem higher than any other hill. At that altitude all nations shall stream in, so that God may instruct them. At Jerusalem, they will learn what God wants: God will teach the nations of the world how to live in peace. Isaiah prophesies famously, "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall not raise the sword against another; nor shall they train for war again." That is what God will teach.

Over 2700 years have passed, and we are still waiting for nations to be at peace. If nations all listened to God's instructions, we would have peace. We must keep this hope alive. War always represents a defeat for humanity. If nations want peace, they must apply their resources – their wealth, their technology and their wisdom – in ways that will achieve it.

Thousands of years ago God chose a small, unknown people for this dream. Today God chooses towns like Cameron, Maysville, Osborn, Amity and Kidder. The eyes of the State are on towns like ours. When people turn to us, whether for community betterment, for food, anniversary celebrations or football, they need to see a city on a hill, where the instruction of God flows forth, an instruction that trains people for peace.

This Advent let's keep this vision alive. Let's make this Christmas different from the rest. Let this be the year when we reconcile with our families, when we give to the needy, and when we prepare our hearts and homes for the coming of Christ. When people see us, let them see God's mountain, where they can learn the ways of peace.