

## *2nd Sunday of Advent*

Disagreements are ordinary. Human beings are all so different that we take a variety of viewpoints on matters like politics, sports, parenting and religion. Weighing different opinions can lead to a better future. Pope Francis is using that strategy by adding a year to the synod shaping the future of the Church. He hears various views before deciding on a path forward.

But in our society we can become overly fascinated with disagreements. We belittle the thoughts of others, assume malicious intent, and exclude people from our circles. Especially regarding politicians, it is easier to take sides than to listen to opposing views and learn why people support the leader they do.

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art has in its collection a Roman Missal from Venice, several centuries old. In its Roman Canon, when the priest prays for the pope and the bishop by name, this missal instructed the priest to pray also for the king by name. Imagine such an instruction in our country, that during the eucharistic prayer at every Mass over the last seven years, say, you heard the priest pray out loud for “Francis our pope, James our bishop” and “Barack,” “Donald,” or “Joseph our president.” That would have raised the temperature in the room. And yet, we all know, all our political leaders deserve our prayers.

Today’s responsorial psalm begins that way. Without mentioning the ruler by name, its first verse is, “O God, with your judgment endow the king, and with your justice, the king’s son; he shall [then] govern your people with justice and your afflicted ones with judgment.” Instead of complaining about the king or damaging his reputation, the psalm prays that God will endow good judgment upon the king and those who share the responsibility of governance. This strategy differs from the way political discourse ensues in our country today, and it shows how believers can lead the way to a better society.

We sing this psalm after Isaiah’s magnificent prophecy about the coming of a ruler filled with the spirit of the Lord, who will govern a society so peaceful that even wild animals protect the vulnerable. “Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.” He will rule from sea to sea, will rescue the poor, and show pity on the lowly. During Advent, as we recall how people awaited the Messiah, and as we yearn for his return, this psalm expresses our belief that only one king can ultimately rule all people without hoarding personal power but using it for the good of others. That king is Jesus Christ.

As we await his coming, we act as ambassadors to make his rule real in this world. If we remain fascinated with disagreements, we miss opportunities to elicit love and understanding, patience and respect, pity for those who are misguided, and hope for the afflicted. You may have recognized in the opening of today’s passage from Isaiah the gifts that come to each of us in confirmation: “a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord.” That spirit does not belong to Christ alone. Each of us possesses the spirit, and confirmation expects us to use it. When we handle disagreements in peace and respect political leaders and followers alike, the world will experience in our actions the coming of Christ today.

*Sunday, December 4, 2022*