

2nd Sunday after Christmas (B)
(Ecclesiasticus 24:1-4. 8-12 / John 1:1-18)
03.01.2021

Dear brothers and sisters,

Jean Racine, one of the great French playwrights of the seventeenth century, opens his unique comedy entitled “the litigants” with these words pronounced by Little John: ‘What I know best is my beginning’.

Inspired by Little John’s affirmation –What I know best is my beginning – I invite you to think back to the beginning of today’s liturgy – the entrance antiphon. Let us allow the words of this entrance antiphon, taken from the book of Wisdom, to teach us something of the good news of Jesus Christ:

“When a profound silence covered all things
and night was in the middle of its course,
your all-powerful word, O Lord,
leaped down from heaven’s royal throne”.

These words are a prophetic and poetic evocation of the mystery of the incarnation celebrated at Christmas. In the middle of the night, a silent night, the Word of God took flesh and was heard.

Without any doubt, we are all surrounded by the night of the pandemic and, at first sight, God seems to be silent, not to say altogether absent. How can God, whom we believe to be a good God, have allowed this pandemic to happen, without intervening to save his children whom He created out of love? A lot of people are legitimately afraid of the unknown which could strike them down tomorrow. Many are fighting to remain alive, too many have already died and so many more will also die alone...

The truth is that, during this pandemic, God is not silent. Nor is He absent as we might be led to think.

Look at the doctors, nurses and ancillary staff in hospitals or care homes. These people are giving themselves without reserve in a bid to alleviate the pain of those who suffer and cure them. Is God not showing his love for us through all these people? Through them, God speaks volumes in the silence of the night. Who is God? God is love. What is love? Look at the NHS workers and so many others engaged so courageously in a spirit of service during the pandemic and here God who is love will be revealed to you.

Look at the many small efforts being made by nearly everybody to comply with the restrictions in place in order to limit the spread of the virus and save lives. Here too, God, who is love, is speaking and acting. He is revealing himself through the innumerable gestures of love his children are posing in regard to their brothers and sisters in humanity. God is not silent or absent during this pandemic. Far from it!

The prophet was right to declare:

“When a profound silence covered all things
and night was in the middle of its course,
your all-powerful word, O Lord,
leaped down from heaven’s royal throne”.

The incarnation of God in Jesus, which was an event in history a little more than two thousand years ago, continues to happen among us today. God is love. When brothers and sisters in humanity help each other in self-giving ways, when they love, serve and respect each other, God is made manifest in the world again. Through their example, God continues to speak and act among us again.

Let us take another example: When a mother cares for her husband and their children day after day, month after month, year after year, (and when I say day after day, I should add also night after night), we can see and hear through her God acting and speaking to us. In her God is at work in the night of our bleak and monotonous daily lives. God is love; God manifests his love to us by this caring mother. Very often, God speaks to us in a humble way, but a hallmark of His way will be that it is personal, priceless and powerful.

The incarnation of the Son of God continues to take place here and now among us when we listen to God’s word; when we keep it in our heart and consent to put it into practice. This is a huge responsibility for us. God is humble. He does not want to act or speak without our collaboration. God trusts in us, even when our own trust in Him is not constant.

In the profound silence of the night, the Lord speaks to us. When we keep vigil with His word – the Sacred Scriptures – the Lord reveals something of his love for us and for all those whom He created out of love.

His word is a light for our path and a lamp for our steps.

His word teaches us to see persons and events as God sees them.

His word gives us the peace that accompanies a presence for which all of us crave in our loneliness.

His word gives us hope at the heart of our darkest nights.

With God’s word, night gives way to dawn.

‘What I know best is my beginning’. The prophet was right to proclaim:

When a profound silence covered all things
and night was in the middle of its course,
your all-powerful word, O Lord,
leaped down from heaven’s royal throne”.

Let us give thanks to the Lord for the mystery of his incarnation, his unceasing incarnation. The Lord does not cease to speak to us in the middle of our nights of every kind. Let us listen to His voice. He shares his light with us. May our hearts be filled with gratitude!