

Father Dave's Homily

12/09/12 2 Advent C

-- The third chapter of Luke's gospel begins with an important announcement. It names the prominent people of that time: first the emperor, then the local governor, and five other political and religious big wigs of that era.

-- But God's word is not sent to any of these. No, it's sent to a backwater preacher in the Judean wilderness. John the Baptist was not a headline-maker. Yes, he was kind of eccentric and had a modest following, but so did a number of preachers in his day.

-- Juan Diego was a poor Mexican who had been baptized a Catholic around the age of 50 in the hills northwest of Mexico City in the early 16th century. At that time, the young Catholic Church was run by Spanish nobles, and the clergy came mostly from their ranks.

-- Yet God's message was sent to him through Mary in his native Indian language. She appeared to him as a young, pregnant woman with native Indian features. She asked him to go to the bishop to request that a Church be built where she appeared.

-- This Advent of 2012, John the Baptist and Juan Diego "bump up" against each other, in a manner of speaking. Since Juan Diego was canonized a saint 10 years ago, his feast has been on this day. Yet this year it is a Sunday of Advent when we encounter John the Baptist.

-- It is also the weekend our parish is celebrating Our Lady of Guadalupe and the story of Juan Diego and the native people of Mexico. This is a source of pride for virtually all Hispanics in the Americas.

-- For, as Mary prayed that *God has cast down the mighty from their thrones and lifted up the lowly*, those words were lived out in the preaching of John the Baptist and the faith of the peasant Juan Diego.

-- Today God's message comes to each and every one of us. It doesn't matter what our level of education happens to be, what is our income, or how significant we are regarded to be by others around us.

-- God speaks his word to us. It is a word of hope, that God's promises will be fulfilled. It is a word of challenge, for God calls us to repentance and to change our hearts in those aspects of life where we need change.

-- Each of us must answer the call which both John the Baptist and St. Juan Diego answered. This can have a price. John the Baptist spoke the truth to his king and he was put in prison and eventually beheaded.

-- Juan Diego went to his bishop who demanded a sign, and only after a difficult journey, sidetracked by the illness of a close relative, was he able to produce that sign with God's help.

-- God's call doesn't take away the challenges we face in life. Sometimes, we may even feel like those challenges increase when we are trying to be faithful to the Lord. It's so much easier to go along with the crowd.

-- But God's strength is with us. When we face rough and winding ways, his grace will smooth them out. He will fill in the valleys of discouragement and level the hills of our personal sinfulness.

-- We only have to trust in the power of God and persevere in faith, just like John the Baptist...just like Juan Diego.