

Father Dave's Homily

12/16/12 3 Advent C

-- In one of my favorite movies, there's a scene where a reporter and his cameraman are walking through a slum in Indonesia. The cameraman has developed a relationship with a family in the slum and supports the family with money for medicine for their sick child.

-- His philosophy is that he should *add his light to the sum of light*. He knows he can't solve poverty in the country, but he can help one family. And he's done this in response to the question in our gospel posed to John the Baptist: *What shall we do?*

-- Now we know John could have his rough side. He didn't mince words in his call to repentance. Just before this passage he'd called some of the people coming to him "a brood of vipers."

-- But the demands of repentance he gives here are not unreasonable. If you have two coats, share one with someone who has none. Be fair and just at work. Don't take bribes. As we would say today, this is not rocket science.

-- And notice the advice is tailored to the people asking for it. Soldiers are told one thing; tax collectors another. He was not asking everyone to live the type of lifestyle he was living out in the wilderness, nor was he telling all of them to become monks.

-- In a sense, he was calling each person, within their practical life situation, to "add their light to the sum of light." And when enough people do that, it can make a real difference.

-- Take a practical example in our own community: Our Knights of Columbus sponsor a Christmas Cheer for needy families of our area. You can see the tree in back with various clothing items. And they have asked parish families and our youth to buy items for one family.

-- What each person does is not much. But it adds up, and the effort ensures a better Christmas for more than 200 families and 800 individuals in our area. That's a significant number for a small town.

- Even more important than the practical help it provides is what it does for the community, our Church and our own hearts.
- God's call to repentance comes in practical ways to each of us, whatever material resources we have or lack. It comes in the challenge of making peace with a neighbor or relative we've had differences with.
- It comes when we say *Thank you* to someone whose help we often take for granted. As I said before, this is not rocket science. It is doable, with God's help and grace.
- So St. Paul says we can truly rejoice. We don't rejoice because all is hunky dory and we've got the Christian living "thing" nailed down. We rejoice because the Lord is with us in our everyday struggles. He is near, and that nearness has little, if anything, to do with the second coming.
- There's a program on the Catholic Channel on Sirius XM radio called the *Busted Halo* show. It's called "busted halo" because, in their words, we're not perfect, but God asks us to try anyway.
- Trying is not a matter of thinking that if we work hard enough we will become perfect. It's a matter of allowing God's grace to work within us - adding our light to the sum of light, so to speak.
- When we make that effort, we can truly rejoice.... For the Lord is near!