

Second Sunday of Advent – Cycle B (December 4, 2011)

The best homily is a homily preached by personal witness and action, giving meaning to the words of St. Francis of Assisi, "Preach the gospel; use words only when necessary." We are about to send two of our own parishioners, Brad and Kevin, to Haiti to connect our parish with the Catholic Community of St. Rose of Lima in Palmarie, Haiti. They will be "missionaries" sent to bring their own talents and gifts of architecture and organizational development to empower the people to re-build their community and village after the devastating earthquake. What Brad and Kevin are going to help the people do is to clear the land...to "prepare" the land by "making straight" the way for a foundation; they are to help "make straight" the land for underneath the ground, far beneath the surface, is water.

These two individuals are giving flesh and blood to the imperative of Isaiah to be a "voice" crying out in the desert, sending "my messenger before you to prepare the way...to clear him a straight path." (Gospel of Mark quoting the prophet Isaiah.) In helping the people clear the land for development, to tap into the water underneath the surface, they are bringing home the message of the gospel for us, that we, too, must "clear the way" for the coming of the Lord. We, too, must remove anything that blocks the way for underneath the surface of our lives is *water*: the waters of the Spirit, the waters of Baptism.

This *water* will release the power of the Spirit within, so that we, too, can re-build our lives, broken and devastated by the earthquake of selfishness and indifference. This *water* will send us as missionaries right here in our local community, to be a "voice crying out in the desert," and our desert is a spiritual one in which we are searching and yearning often in the wrong places and with the wrong people.

The irony of sending Brad and Kevin to Haiti is that we are reminded that we have much work to do to clear away the rubble in our own lives and the people of St. Rose of Lima are our missionaries; the poor in the village of Palmarie are ministering to us by helping us to see how we are in need of conversion. These poor people are the "voice" of the Baptist for us who have so much, this Voice reminding us that the one more powerful than he, the Lord, is coming; the Lord will baptize us with the power and fire of the Holy Spirit.

Most of us are baptized, we have the water of the Spirit buried deep within our souls. What can each one of us do to allow this *water* to the surface of our lives? It is only by tapping this great *water* of the Spirit that we journey from the desert into the Promised Land of the Kingdom. And Second Peter reminds us that God is patient with us, he wants us to be saved and in our patient waiting for the "new heavens and new earth" we are to be found without "stain or defilement...at peace in his sight."