

Homily for 3rd Sunday of Advent

During this past week I called the company that supplies the prescriptions that I take. They had made a mistake on my most recent order. As I navigated my way through the myriad of instructions, I became increasingly struck by the fact that the company wasn't interested in my name. They were interested in my membership number. The more they kept asking for that number, the more irritated I became.

As I struggled with my anger, it struck me that in so many parts of our lives we have simply become a number. Think about it. We have a Social Security number, cell phone number, pager number, internet provider number, employee I.D. number, a credit card number, PIN number, ATM access number...and that's only a partial list. More and more we are identified as numbers and less as members of a world-wide family.

The number syndrome is nothing more than another example of how much our world has lost touch with its relationship with God and with each other. The number syndrome is but another indication that we continue to lose touch with the sacredness of life in the name of efficiency and expediency. The only problem with efficiency is that our humanity gets lost.

We need the world to change and change is what the readings today are about. All the readings begin with lifeless and drab pictures that are transformed into life-giving and enriching images: the scorching desert becomes the fertile crescent; the barren land becomes the productive garden; the prison becomes the exultation of the broken and the weak who are made whole. The message is clear...God is coming to change the world...our world, our hearts, our lives. God is comes to teach us how precious and how sacred all life is.

But the coming of God into our world demands something of each one of us. We cannot be forgiven of our failings unless we are willing to repent of them first. We cannot call ourselves disciples unless we are willing to let the Word of God take root in our hearts. We cannot prepare for the coming of Christ unless we are willing to recognize the dignity and value of ourselves and of every human being.

The sands of Advent begin to trickle away. It is time for us to prepare our hearts by living not in words but in deeds. Christ is coming. We have not the time to waste.