



Advent Reflection

Day #12

Thursday, December 10

Isaiah 41:13-20; Matthew 11:11-15

In Isaiah 41:13-20 (first reading), one phrase really resonates with me. The Lord says to a troubled Israel, “Fear not; I will help you...” Some Bible authorities remind us that our Lord says, “Fear not” no less than 365 times in scripture, in one way or another: “Be not afraid; be anxious for nothing, etc.” Thus, He is always very consistent to reassure us when we are afraid, no matter what obstacles we might face.

However, the Lord also says, “I will help you.” And, although He is somewhat vague about what kind of help He will provide, He is clear that He will quench severe thirst by providing rivers, fountains and springs where least expected, and He will turn marshlands and wastelands into lush forests of useful foliage and trees. The Israelites may have taken the Lord’s words literally 2500 years ago, but these words can have much practical application in our contemporary lives.

We are currently in the throes of a COVID pandemic that has upended our lives in ways we never could have imagined. Aside from direct disease-related effects, COVID inflicts tremendous economic, financial, lifestyle and emotional hardships. Walking from my home in River North towards State Street and Michigan Avenue, I observe a city that resembles a post-apocalyptic Chicago. Very few people and/or automobiles are out and about.

Bloomington’s Home Store, in the old Medinah Temple building, is boarded up, emptied of all merchandise, and closed for business. The shuttered Rainforest café building is looking for new tenant. Restaurants struggle to remain open by providing outdoor seating despite temperatures near freezing. Chicagoans, much like the Israelites, are experiencing a wasteland..... a COVID induced wasteland.

Nevertheless, the Lord assures us in today’s first reading that He can do great things with wastelands. Thus, I trust, no matter how bleak things appear, that He will lead us through the COVID wasteland to “lush forests of useful foliage and trees,” a metaphor for unexpected Blessings that He will reveal in time. These might include new technologies for diagnosis and innovative treatments for all kinds of diseases. He did this in the aftermath of the AIDS epidemic, and I trust He will do that now.

Reflection by Holy Name Cathedral Parishioner Dr. Christine E. Lawless