

First Sunday of Advent, November 27

Is 2:1-5, Rom 13:11-14, Mt 24:37-44

“He will judge between the nations and arbitrate between many peoples. They will hammer their swords into ploughshares and their spears into sickles. Nation will not lift sword against nation, no longer will they learn how to make war.” (Is 2:4, Jerusalem Bible)

The holy prophet Isaiah, writing to his people around seven hundred years before Christ, offered a bold vision of a world made whole: the God of Israel drawing the whole world to himself and teaching justice and peace, and the people recycling arms into tools for farms.

It is easy to look at our world, still gone mad with war almost three thousand years later, and see this vision as impossible. The hometown of my great-grandparents – Myrhorod, Ukraine, named the “city of peace” – has seen very little of peace this year; our own Chicago has not suffered foreign invasion or the terror of missiles, but still faces horrific violence from within as people lift up guns against people. Violence, whether physical or verbal, ever surrounds us. Our own work for peace and justice brings some measure of healing to the world, but true and lasting reconciliation always feels just out of reach. Thankfully, we are not on our own.

Like with many of the future-oriented prophecies of Scripture, Isaiah here shows us the end result of a work in progress. In the person and ministry of Jesus and the life of the Church, we see the house of the Lord elevated, and the Law and the Word going forth from Jerusalem – not only from the Temple Mount but from Golgotha as well. As we enter Advent today, we recall the first coming of Jesus in humility, but primarily look forward to his return in glory and the establishment of the new heaven and earth, in which Isaiah’s words will come to fruition.

- Jeff Lipschultz, Holy Name parishioner