

"REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS; AGAIN I SAY, REJOICE. INDEED THE LORD IS NEAR."

3rd Sunday, Introit, Phil. 4-5

Liturgical Color: Rose

"The Lord is near!" That is our challenge, to BELIEVE that the Lord is near to what we hear on the 10 o'clock news. Near? Really?

The breaking news announces rape, pillage, theft, murder all close at hand, all very near. Never in human history have so many known so much stress through the eyes of eye witness news.

A fast from all of that and violent video games for awhile might be the fasting most needed in our day.

And yet we must deal with reality as is. Rather than the cold stare of the news camera, the Arts allow us to glimpse a wider lens, a deeper texture, a broader scope view of what is real. I have just returned from seeing THE BOOK THIEF movie. It paints the picture of an orphan girl living through the travails of World War II in Germany. In the darkness of her basement, she learns to read by candlelight, and is helped by a young Jew sheltered there from the Nazis by her family. The Jewish love for the word and for learning light up her life. This 13 year old is a marvelous Advent figure. See the BOOK THIEF, REFLECT UPON IT. Make it an Advent experience and talk about it.

For all the good it does, TV News runs the risk of us becoming jaded, cynical, even drained of hope. Yet the message of Advent is that despite, disruption and even horror in our world, The

Lord is near! We have not been abandoned to our own caprices.

If our spirits are sometimes parched and dry then:

"The desert and the parched land will exult. IS 35:1

If the shadows of terror frighten you, then:

"Be strong. fear not. Here is your God!" "...sorrow and mourning will flee!"

Isaiah, 2nd Reading

And in the Gospel John the Baptist today asks an all important question:

"Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?"

And our answer?

"Yes! We look. We listen, and when our looking finds all around us, not just the horrors of eyewitness news, but the milk of human kindnesses which nourish a hungry world, we shall know that Jesus IS NEAR!

(For a beautiful image for Rejoice Sunday go to my Facebook icon on this site.)

Breakfast Question: Despite all the eye witness bad news, is there any image from the Arts that enlivens my hope?

Personal Reflection: How can I bring Jesus NEARER this week?