

Advent Reflections

December 16, 2019



God is a God of truth and blesses us with the gift and fruit of His truth. We need to approach Him in openness and truth and we will be blessed with His abundant grace.

In our first reading, Balaam assures the Israelites that God is blessing them with great abundance. Balaam is a true prophet of God and gives encouragement to the Israelites..."your encampments are like gardens beside a stream...a star shall advance from Jacob and a staff shall rise from Israel."

In the words of our Responsorial Psalm: "teach me your ways, O Lord," we ask for guidance and wisdom from the Lord and we reiterate our own trust in God.

In the Gospel, Matthew tells us how the chief priests and elders of the people question Jesus' authority in order to trick him. Jesus with honesty and God's own authority simply states: "tell me first the answer to my question and then I will answer yours. By whose authority does John baptize?" Jesus' simple question reveals to these leaders that He is open and true --transparent in all He teaches.

May we learn from these readings today that if we are open and honest with God and each other, God will bless us and lead us along our own path to Him. Then we too shall be like "cedars planted by the Lord" standing straight and tall -- pointing the way to our God to all whom we meet along our life's path.

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Reading 1 [NM 24:2-7, 15-17A](#)

When Balaam raised his eyes and saw Israel encamped, tribe by tribe,
the spirit of God came upon him,
and he gave voice to his oracle:

The utterance of Balaam, son of Beor,
the utterance of a man whose eye is true,
The utterance of one who hears what God says,
and knows what the Most High knows,
Of one who sees what the Almighty sees,
enraptured, and with eyes unveiled:
How goodly are your tents, O Jacob;
your encampments, O Israel!
They are like gardens beside a stream,
like the cedars planted by the LORD.
His wells shall yield free-flowing waters,
he shall have the sea within reach;
His king shall rise higher,
and his royalty shall be exalted.

Then Balaam gave voice to his oracle:

The utterance of Balaam, son of Beor,
the utterance of the man whose eye is true,
The utterance of one who hears what God says,
and knows what the Most High knows,
Of one who sees what the Almighty sees,
enraptured, and with eyes unveiled.
I see him, though not now;
I behold him, though not near:
A star shall advance from Jacob,
and a staff shall rise from Israel.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 25:4-5AB, 6 AND 7BC, 8-9](#)

R.(4) Teach me your ways, O Lord.

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me;
teach me your paths,
Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my savior.

R. Teach me your ways, O Lord.

Remember that your compassion, O LORD,
and your kindness are from of old.
In your kindness remember me,
because of your goodness, O LORD.

R. Teach me your ways, O Lord.

Good and upright is the LORD;
thus he shows sinners the way.
He guides the humble to justice,
he teaches the humble his way.

R. Teach me your ways, O Lord.

Alleluia [PS 85:8](#)

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Show us, LORD, your love,
and grant us your salvation.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel [MT 21:23-27](#)

When Jesus had come into the temple area,
the chief priests and the elders of the people approached him
as he was teaching and said,

"By what authority are you doing these things?
And who gave you this authority?"

Jesus said to them in reply,

"I shall ask you one question, and if you answer it for me,
then I shall tell you by what authority I do these things.

Where was John's baptism from?

Was it of heavenly or of human origin?"

They discussed this among themselves and said,

"If we say 'Of heavenly origin,' he will say to us,

'Then why did you not believe him?'

But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we fear the crowd,
for they all regard John as a prophet."

So they said to Jesus in reply, "We do not know."

He himself said to them,

"Neither shall I tell you by what authority I do these things."