



Growing in God's Favor

I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Is 9:1-6)

People liberated

¹The people who walked in darkness / have seen a great light;/ Upon those who lived in a land of gloom/ a light has shone./ ²You have brought them abundant joy/ and great rejoicing;/ They rejoice before you as people rejoice at harvest,/ as they exult when dividing the spoils./

Tools of oppression no more

³For the yoke that burdened them,/ the pole on their shoulder,/ The rod of their taskmaster,/ you have smashed, as on the day of Midian./ ⁴For every boot that tramped in battle,/ every cloak rolled in blood,/ will be burned as fuel for fire./

The child and his designations

⁵For a **child*** is born to us, a son is given to us;/ upon his shoulder dominion rests./ They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero,/ Father-For-ever, Prince of Peace./ ⁶His dominion is vast/ and forever peaceful,/ Upon David's throne, and over his kingdom,/ which he confirms and sustains/ By judgment and justice,/ both now and forever./ The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this!

THE FOCUS: On the Child Born

COMMENTARY

- Vv.1-2 in parallel style talk about people experiencing light, abundant joy, after a period of darkness.
- Simile is also employed (*as at the harvest, as men make merry...*) v.2.
- Vv.3-4 give initial reasons for rejoicing: violent end of violence; yoke, pole, rod are

smashed; boot, cloak will be burned.

- V.5 gives a better reason to rejoice: birth of a child // son is given; with terrific titles (*for adult leader, with divine character*).
- V.6 talks of the extent of his territory (dominion, sphere) and also of his exercise of power (*peace, judgment and justice*).

REFLECTIONS

On this Feast of Sto. Niño, it is but proper to focus our attention on the child born.

The description of the child / son sends a strong message to the oppressors of Israel (*God's people, people trusting in God for their liberation*).

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 98:1, 2-3,3-4, 5-6)

**ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH
HAVE SEEN THE SAVING POWER OF GOD.**

SECOND READING (Eph 1:3-6, 15-18)

God's actions to us in and through Christ

^{3*} Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens,* ^{4d}as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love ^{5e}he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, ^{6f}for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved.

Paul's actions and wishes to the Ephesians

^{15*} Therefore, I, too, hearing of your faith in the **Lord Jesus** and of your love* for all the holy ones, ^{16o}do not cease giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ^{17p}that the God of our

FEAST OF THE STO. NIÑO (C)

January 20, 2019

Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him. ^{18q}May the eyes of [your] hearts be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones.

THE FOCUS: The Lord Jesus Christ

COMMENTARY

- The liturgists choose vv.3-6 and 15-18 as the Second Reading. The first cut (vv.3-6) talks about the Father who acts favorably on the Christian believers in and through Christ. The actions of the Father are the following: blessed us; he chose us to be holy and blameless; he destined us for adoption. The second cut (vv.15-18) talks about Paul's feelings because of the Ephesians' faith and love.
- Paul expresses his feelings by: not ceasing to give thanks, remembering you in my prayers, wishing that God may give you spirit of wisdom, revelation, eyes of hearts enlightened, may have knowledge...

REFLECTIONS

Once again, we should be reminded that we are celebrating the feast of Sto. Niño. So here we must be keen again on the ideas which refer to Christ.

We have seen in the reading that Christ is through whom God the Father operates in us. The Father does good things to us because of his Son.

Jesus Christ is active as the Father deals with us. The Father acts in and through Christ. Christ is also busy.

GOSPEL READING (Lk 2: 41-52)

Setting: The young boy Jesus

^{41*} Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, ⁴²and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom.

The lost boy Jesus

⁴³After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

⁴⁴Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, ⁴⁵but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him..

The found boy Jesus, the intelligent one

⁴⁶After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, ⁴⁷and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." ⁴⁹And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"* ⁵⁰But they did not understand what he said to them.

The obedient boy Jesus

^{51q}He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. ^{52r}And Jesus **advanced [in] wisdom and age and favor** before God and man.

THE FOCUS: The Boy, Jesus

COMMENTARY

- The text is a part of the Infancy Narrative of Luke 1-2. It is the last story of the infancy narrative.
- Since it is the feast of Sto. Niño, we must focus our attention on anything that pertains to the boy Jesus: Jesus was 12 years old (v.41), went up to Jerusalem (v.41), remained in Jerusalem after the Passover (v.43), was lost in effect, was found after 3 days (v.46), was sitting in the midst of teachers, listening, asking questions (v.46), asked a question to his parents also: "Why were you looking for me?"
- Jesus must be in his Father's house, obedient to the Father (v.49). Jesus went with his parents, obedient to them (v.51).
- He grew in wisdom, age and favor (v52) .

REFLECTIONS

The boy Jesus respected the traditions of his

parents (*to go to Jerusalem annually to celebrate feast of the Passover*). It is presumed that he also accompanied his father to attend other important Jewish feasts. He understood their concerns.

In the Temple, the boy Jesus finds home and school: He must be in his Father's house; he discusses with the learned.

III. TYING THE THREE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR SHARING/HOMILY

The First Reading focuses on the son who gives hope to the nation. The Second Reading focuses on the role of Jesus, Son of God, in our salvation. The Father gives favors to us through and in him. He is the channel of God's blessings. The Gospel Reading focuses on Jesus' obedience to the Father / and parents. By obedience, he grew in wisdom and favor.

How to develop your homily/reflections

Begin by telling a story of children how they interact with the parents or teachers, how they follow instructions: "Let us sing, let us dance, go the board, submit your assignments..., etc." In school, children are trained to obey. Their attention is called when they are doing something else.

The feast of Sto. Niño should remind us of a seemingly long forgotten characteristic of a child, i.e., obedience.

It is the duty of parents to train their children to do the right thing (obedience to rules and regulations, parents, school policies, group decisions) and to call their attention if they are disrespectful and are doing the wrong things.

No one should condone any wrongdoing, "*kasi bata pa sila.*" (*Consentidor!*)

The child Jesus became great because he learned obedience from his parents. His parents made their feelings / opinions felt when something went wrong (on his or their part). He grew in wisdom and favor.

Speaking of being critical, he became critical later on. (*Refer to the controversies, debates with scribes and Pharisees, etc., during his ministry.*) But this is not the main theme of this feast.

Sto. Niño was aware of his mission at an early age. He was discussing already with the

experts; he no longer wanted to hold the "*saya*" (seam) of his mother. With wisdom and purpose, he lived his life.

This is the goal of every parenting. We just don't multiply children without training them to be somebody someday.

Alas there are lots of irresponsible parents who multiply children without feeling obliged to train them to attain a good future (*Giving food and allowance is not enough. Important also is inculcating human, moral and spiritual values into their minds through example.*)

The First Reading talks about the birth of a child who will be doing a big job. He will be a responsible (wise and just) leader of the nation. We Christians interpret this child as referring to Christ. The Second Reading talks about Christ, responsible for our blessings and graces (salvation). Through him we are saved. He has good relations with the Father. And the Gospel Reading portrays the boy Jesus' obedience to the Father and his parents at an early age. This continues up to his death on the cross. Jesus lives in obedience though it entails pain and suffering.

What happens if we do not learn obedience?

Chaos, anarchy, everybody does one's own thing, no community, no family, no orderly parish, no good organization, no good leaders, no blessings, no favors. We spend criticizing others all the time, without accomplishing anything, because we do not obey anything, anyone.

The feast of Sto. Niño should teach us the value of obedience (to God and to rightful authorities) in order to fight oppression, to build our nation, to establish communities and to give a bright future for our children.

-Prepared by Fr. Cielo Almazan, OFM

III. OUR CONTEXT

1. Today is Holy Childhood Day.
2. How often do you see street children begging these days?
3. Discuss the reality of child labor in our country. (HM)