



Sunday before Epiphany

Isaiah 40:1 *"... comfort my people ...speak to the heart of Jerusalem ...her humiliation is ended, her sin is pardoned...the voice of one crying in the wilderness..."*

What does it mean to speak to the heart of man? What language and words do we use, in order for the heart to make ready to receive the Word? The words have to be real and truthful to the gospel. One could not speak to the heart but in Truth, otherwise, the heart would close in itself even more. The heart that needs to be spoken to is looking for comfort. It is a heart that was deeply harmed and yet not broken. A heart that learned to cope with sin by becoming sinful. A mistrustful heart who lost faith.



Andrey Yanev

<https://www.saatchiart.com/art/Painting-Forgiveness/10831/462392/view>

A heart that was betrayed and has betrayed. A heart that is not listened to and does not listen with trust to anything. What can be said in order for the heart to remember and accept the reality of mercy? What word that comes out of the silence of being forgotten could bring comfort without the fear of being an intruder?

One would speak if one knew how. And if one speaks, who would listen to him or her? We know from the experience of our own silence, we know from the silence of others that the mercy of God is easily forgotten and the reality of forgiveness often estranged by the heart. Even when looking at the heart today, people look so they can speak about what is broken and to figure out the pieces; they rarely speak just to confess and ask for forgiveness.

What word could be uttered without the fear of getting lost within the business and gossiping of voices today so it can touch the silence of the sorrowful heart who is not confessing anymore?

Somebody was saying that what was more surprising in the gospel is to see not that Jesus lived at the margins; not that He lived in the midst of the marginalized and ate with the sinners; not that love embraced those who were left aside but rather that those who experienced rejection came to listen and to trust Christ. "This is a miracle!" (Fr Nicolae Steinhardt). Within the reality of the community, in the heart of the city, we know what the margins look like. The community is not only made up of kind, faithful poor, but also of the thieves, the addicts, the drug dealers, the criminals, those who make money out of the ignorance of people and those who spend and waste everything they borrow. People who become rich by cheating on others, like Zacheus, and people who were terrorized and possessed by demons like the myrrbearing women.

The miracle, within this context, is that they listen to Him and follow Him. Not only that the love became flesh and broke Himself for all, but also that the sinners partook of it with honesty, trust and wholeheartedly.

Are we not witnesses of this miracle at the mission?



The Gospel According to Mark 1:1-8:

*"...As it is written in the prophets, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who shall **prepare your way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'** John was baptizing in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins..."*

The encounter with Christ is prepared by John. The voice that cries in the desert, the cry that touches the heart of men in order for them to get ready. The voice who speaks about the mercy of God and

forgiveness to people who are condemned by the world. The voice that is alone in the middle of all the accusations. The lonely voice that is not afraid to speak back to the many voices that accuse and self accuse.

We know the desert in the city and what it looks like today. More or less. A desert where the dogs run rampant in the streets. The desert is made up of lack of community, mistrust, stealing and cheating on everybody. A desert driven out by the desire of profit and pleasure where innocence is consumed. Relationships distorted and perverted. A desert that today brought about plague and illness, where the sick are counted only to increase the fear and terror of coming closer to those who are not like you. The desert makes you think that one could survive only if you build up connections and relations based on fear, interest, control and reciprocity, where the sins are forgotten and hidden but never forgiven, where the familiarity reigns within the relationships by harming the creativity, mystery and freedom of the human being.

Within this desert, the church is called to speak to the heart of the city. Knowing the heart of the desert, the church makes known the forgiveness of God and becomes the heart of the world by preparing the path for Christ. Everything that happens within the community is not a goal in itself, it is the preparation for the encounter with the Bridegroom. The path is real if the community offers to the city a different way of being human. A different way of relating with each other, a different way of working, a different way of serving, a different and radical way to encounter the stranger and to clothe him. Therefore the community is not the place where people are hiding their sins, but through them they come closer to the mercy of God. A place where mistakes are not used to control people but to teach them goodness. To practice what is pleasing to God in order for people to rejoice in their freedom as the path that leads them to the Bridegroom. There is a real purpose and there is a real way in which you can prepare and repent.

Church detaches from the world in everything she does. She cannot take from the world structures and social values because it is the cause to bring about the structure where people are not afraid to forgive and look for forgiveness because they know that through their fear would not be controlled but showed how to approach God.

We lost today the meaning of getting ready, of preparing to meet the Lord. We think that we can come out of bed without having our face and our feet washed and cleaned. What we learned today in the Gospel is that the preparation precedes and shows to the

people another way of being human so they can become like God when they put on Christ.

Malachi 1:1

*The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel... **Take it to the heart!***

St. Paul's Second Letter to Timothy 4:5-8

For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

All the things that happen within the community at the margins are a preparation for the city and its people for the encounter with the Bridegroom. We are really blessed to see the freedom of men and the mercy of God touching each other. This miracle of the people of the margins coming and listening to Christ is not a goal in itself. Both for those who live this repentance and for us who are called to witness it, repentance is not a goal in itself. We are called to take it to heart fully so the heart would not keep anything for itself. It prepares us for the encounter towards which we look and wait with hope. This is not a small thing that is given to us, this is the path of repentance. Before the feast of Theophany we pray that time is given so we can prepare without rushing and with the hope that more will be seen and more will be partaken of.



*Please pray for the community In Goma and the children in their care:

Neema; Rosine; Justine; Miriam; Chance; Jemyma; Patricia; Alliance; Nice; Dorcas; Justine; Agnes; Muhindo Dorcas.

*On Sunday we are going to collect money to help our sister community in Goma to start a bakery. They take care of abandoned girls in order to provide them with a home and to help them acquire skills that will help them have a decent life. They focus on sewing and baking.

Please talk to Fr Nicolaie if you want to help more.

On Theophany:

January 5

Royal Hours throughout the day

7 PM Vespers Liturgy of St Basil followed by Blessing of the Waters

Festal colation and

Vigil until midnight

January 6

8AM Church doors open for silent prayer (Jesus Prayer)

9 AM Divine liturgy

Please pray for the sick:

Tihomir; Kate; Payton Clark (back surgery;); Sana, and her family in Egypt.Sana's father passed away in Egypt;Isaiah;Pani Alexandra; Mary Mcgee's daughter Sydney; Peter Christine; Stephanie; Iulia; Jason; Sophia; Alexander; Charles; Tom; Paul; Phillip Hadler and his wife Juliet; Cristeena; Ann brown's daughter; Constanta; Jeni; Florea, Robert; Constantin, Silvia, Claudia Alex; Jincy; Shiron Crisreen; Allain;Levalin and the family;Seena Colin and her husband;; Waheeda and children; Faizah (depression); Shirin and her family; Sana and her husband; Eva; Frank, Cristina; Daniela, Jerry; Delia; Ati ; Ragaie; Victoria;Prayers for Mike.Farida need prayers for her hand to heal ;Prayers for Roselyne and family ; Ana, Cornelia; Prayer for Leon to Jerry; Nikitha, Ocean;Prayer for Gloria, Anne, Marina, Marie, Edemene; Joanna and family GN; Rejoice;Romana, Colin, Michael, Peter, Henry, Joanna, George, Kelly;Tom; Marina;Sandra and her son Chris;Kumari;Susan;child James; Aaron; Sylvia;Fr Jonathan;Tharshini and her two children; Ann Tyron and her family; Sandra Gomaz's children; Sameen; Sophia;Amy;Swetha and children ;Charitha; Jitesh's parents ;Demene;Carol; Gloria; Hawa Bibi; Vimaladevi; Tharsini and her child; Sana's Sister; Ann T.'s husband; Lynn;Michelle;Emanuel(Mani);Stefanie;Geoff;Joey;Evangelia;Sophia;Melanie; Césare;Tanya;Piper;Darius; Zamalk; Nelly; Nahla; Mira; Sandral ;Brenda;Anna Avairo's daughter Vol Gomaz; Levlin's two children Sri' ; Helen; Paul; Wafaa and Sana's sister

Please pray for health and salvation: Rejoice; Claudio of San Egedio health and salvation; George, Connie, Nick, Fennie, Theodore, Chris, Nick , Toulia, Steven ,Nicole, Tony, Sam, Sophia.; Prayer for Mary Mcgee.She lost her grandmother.; Fr. Michael and Pani Karen; Anthony and the family.He lost his bro in Trinidad.He is hoping to make a visit to Trinidad; Ramanand and his families in Gayana, USA and here in Canada.Ramanand lost three of his family members including one of his brothers ,suddenly within two months. Paola. Elizabeth; Matthi; Dave and his family; Jai's family; Anne Tyran; Joseph to find housing; Lito; Mauro, Prayers for Ted's family (incarcerated son to be free)

Dameal asking prayers for his future wife Fathima to be free from addictions
Liz Gibicar asking prayers for her mother; Mom waiting for baby
Tejasree;Prashastha

Maria and Dingo; Crisent; Helen; Greta; Elizabeth; Dean; John; Liz; Crisent; Ann Brown; Elizabeth; Sifie; Allen; Leon; Ricky and his family from back home for the hope of reuniting; Aaron, Anastas, Olivia, Gelly, Frank, Eva, George, Rebecca, Andreas, Cathyann, Reigan, Stephanie, Peter, Christine; Christian family from Bangladesh, Sandra, Peter, Angel, Bless, Grace, Swetha family; Atlaw single mom at shelter, Vernevil family; the family of Kenide; Saathiya; Sena; Vinothiny Yvienne; Abdul; Sakanthalathevy; Jumke; Naimi; Anish; Joshua Daniel J Maria Lolita Soliman Torres, Jonathan , Richard, Richard, Mary , Elizabeth, Michael, Bill, Robert, Alan, Joanne

Please pray for the deceased: Rejoice mother

Pani Eleanor; Fr John; Alexandru, Constantin; Robert; fr Aurel; Georgi; Rada; Petre; Stela; William; Samuel; Debie; John; Amy, Willie; Dave's wife; Ana; Shirin 's cousin in Jordan; Father Lawrence; Dave; Anne Tyran's father; Edith, Sr. Mary Magdalene, Joice, BettyAnn, James, Pauanasuy Kamthasang, Maria (Covid), Andrei, Agostina , Carminda, Vimaladevi's sister; Sri's mother, Carol's Mother and 23 year old nephew passed away in Haiti. Demene's mother; Dalalzaki