

2nd SUNDAY OF ADVENT

St. Luke 3:1-6

There is a poem written by an Englishman named Francis Thompson and published over a hundred years ago in *A.D.* 1893. It is called "The Hound of Heaven." J.R.R. Tolkien, who wrote the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy, said of the poem, "The name is strange. It startles one at first. It is so bold, so new, so fearless. It does not attract, rather the reverse. But when one reads the poem this strangeness disappears. The meaning is understood. As the hound follows the hare, never ceasing in its running, ever drawing nearer in the chase, with unhurrying and unperturbed pace, so does God follow the fleeing soul by His Divine grace. And though in sin or in human love, away from God it seeks to hide itself, Divine grace follows after, unwearyingly follows ever after, till the soul feels its pressure forcing it to turn to Him alone in that never ending pursuit" ("The Neumann Press Book of Verse," *A.D.* 1988).

The poem begins: "I fled Him, down the nights and down the days; I fled Him, down the arches of the years; I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways of my own mind; and in the mist of tears I hid from Him, and under running laughter; Up vistaed hopes I sped; And shot, precipitated, adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears, from those strong Feet that followed, followed after but with unhurrying chase, and unperturbed pace, deliberate speed, majestic instancy, they beat—and a Voice beat more instant than the Feet—'All things betray thee, who betrayest Me.'" It ends: "Alack, thou knowest not how little worthy of any love thou art! Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee, save Me, save only Me? All which I took from thee I did but take, not for thy harms, but just that thou might'st seek it in My arms. All which thy child's mistake fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home: rise, clasp My hand, and come. Halts by me that footfall: Is my gloom, after all, shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?"

Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest, I am He Whom thou seekest!"

It is one hundred and eighty-two lines written by a failed medical student, living on the streets, addicted to opium who would die of tuberculosis. It is one hundred and eighty-two lines of despair and desperation that abandons itself to hope. The man who fled from God who followed is mankind who has fled from the covenant that the Lord has offered. No one can say that they do not know that Christ loves them and desires nothing more than to be with them. I may not feel that love, I may not experience that love, but I cannot, with any integrity, deny that love. For thousands of years man has run from that love, preferring the ease of his own sin to the demands of God's love. From the covenant made with Adam, to that made with Noah, and then with Abraham, man has refuted God's love, not necessarily by what he thinks but by how he acts. In Christ, the final and everlasting covenant, God became man so that no more could anyone deny His love. In the beauty of the one, true Church that is the Catholic Church, Christ is present always in the Blessed Sacrament of the tabernacle. No one can say that they have to travel too far to meet God, for he is in every Catholic Church in every town, in every nation, on earth. He has chased as the unrelenting hound of Heaven. All we must do is to turn around and see Him there.

There is a prophecy written by a man named Isaiah almost three thousand years ago. It has no name other than the name of He of whom it spoke. It begins: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him" (Is 11:1-2). It ends: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb: and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: the calf and the lion, and the sheep shall abide together, and a little child shall lead them" (Is 11:6). That little child who should guide us would grow to say: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself" (Jn 12:32) and 'Behold, I make all things new" (Apoc 21:5). And so in Advent we look for the day when He who was promised since the dawn of

history will come again and “the wolf shall dwell with the lamb: and the leopard shall lie down with the kid” (Is 11:6).

So turn and face the Lord and see that He who is coming is here now. Let every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord and every knee bend at the name of Jesus. Amen.