

3rd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

St. John 2:1-11

Christ, at the beginning of His public life, stands in the synagogue and reads from the prophet Isaiah the promise of God that He would send a messiah, someone to lift us from the poverty of our lives, to set us free from hurt and pain and suffering, and to remain with us forever. He repeats the promise of God made for the past few thousand years and recorded in the books of the Old Testament—a promise that had been heard over and over again by the Jewish people and repeated every Sabbath, just as the Gospel is repeated every Sunday for us. But now, in Christ, He says that that promise made for thousands of years and awaited by generations of men and women, is being fulfilled in Him.

The promise of the messiah was well known to the Jewish people but there seems to have been a lack of expectation that the messiah would ever come. In the verses that follow this Gospel it says that the people became so angry with our Lord for claiming to be the messiah that they grabbed Him and dragged Him to the top of a hill to throw Him off the cliff. Was it because they lacked the faith to believe what we believe; that God has become Man and dwelt amongst us? Or was it that they could not believe that the promises of God could really ever be fulfilled—had they lost hope?

We all need a sense of hope, a belief that we will have what we do not have. We all need a sense that we can be carried to a place far above the ordinariness of our lives—that we can transcend our life. This is why art and music and ceremony are inseparable from the Mass, for the beauty and nobility of these man-made things orient us towards the divine. They set the mood and give a sense of something beautiful. They raise our hearts and minds and carry our souls in prayer as though on the wings of Angels to the great promise of God that we can be loved and that we are loved—even if that promise has

begun to be fulfilled but is yet to be fulfilled.

If you have read the Old Testament then you will know just how many signs and prophecies become fulfilled in Christ. A simple reading of the books of the Old Testament and the books of the New Testament show this. The hopes of the men and women told in the writings of the Old Testament are met in Christ. Although not met in their lifetime they are met when Christ, after His crucifixion descends to Hell, the place of the dead, to lead them to Heaven, whose gates, closed throughout history, are now opened.

Today it is easy to lose sight that the work of God is not complete but goes on by the power of the Holy Spirit and that the promise of an end to suffering is yet to be fulfilled. Hope is a divine virtue and not one formed by man. It is instilled in us at Baptism and sealed in Confirmation, restored in Penance and re-enlivened in the Eucharist. Hope can be desperately difficult to maintain but the loss of hope, hopelessness, is akin to death. One of the great gifts that we can give to one another is that same gift that Christ gave in the Synagogue on that Sabbath so long ago—hope.