Advent 3 A

MDP of God

Our 1st reading today from the Prophet Isaiah speaks of transformation—he says the desert and the dry land will be transformed—the steppe (which is just another word to describe the desert)—will bloom with abundant flowers

It’s such a beautiful—hopeful message

And my friends—I think we really need a hopeful message today—right now our parish is reeling from a sense of betrayal—many of us are very much hurting

In the past—leaders in the Church have really mishandled these situations—which has already brought so much pain---which makes this all the more difficult to get our heads around—I honestly thought these kind of situations were something we could put behind us and we could move on—I never thought anything like this would directly touch our parish

The question is—how do we respond? How we do have the kind of positive transformation the Prophet Isaiah is talking about?

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My friends—we need to remember that from the time of the Fall of our 1st parents—*Satan has been working hard to lead people away from God*

In the book of Genesis—it’s clear that the serpent in the Garden was really Satan—seeking to lead people away from their Creator

Satan always seeks to pit people against each other—and we saw that in the Garden when Adam blames his sin on “the woman”—he basically said, “It’s her fault that I sinned”

And throughout the ages we’ve seen Satan—**tempt people—distract people**—**lead people astray** from the Lord and holiness

Which of course made it necessary for Jesus to come into the world—and we’ll be celebrating that great event in a week and a half

And even since Jesus did His saving work—the battle continues—*Jesus won the war*—**but the battle continues**—*and we’re all part of that battle*

So where do we go from here?

We need to ask ourselves—are we going to seek to please God in the midst of this—or are we going to make Satan happy? (as happy as Satan can get anyway)

Why would anyone want to make Satan happy? *Obviously no sane person would seek that*—but unfortunately in the face of evil sometimes *people do exactly what Satan wants them to do*

**So** if you want to make Satan happy—then stay away from Mass---that will make Satan very happy

If you want to make Satan happy—refuse to receive Jesus’ gift of Himself in Holy Communion—that will thrill Satan

If you want to make Satan happy—then refuse to go to confession—Satan just loves when we remain trapped in our sins

If you want to make Satan happy—then make up your mind to no longer give of your time, your talent, or your treasure to build up God’s Family—the Church

Now—in all honesty—*I don’t know why anyone would want to make Satan happy-*--but often when people see the weaknesses and sins of others in the Church—especially when they see the sins of priests and other leaders in the Church---**that’s exactly what they do**

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But my friends—that’s not going to help bring transformation to the spiritual desert we find ourselves in—that’s not going to bring the abundance of beautiful flowers that Isaiah describes from the steppe

**Now**--*if you want to give Satan a black eye in this*—**then seek to please God**

For the last week most of us have been saying, “How could this have happened?”

Wouldn’t it be great if Satan walked away from this saying, “How could this have happened?-- This isn’t what was supposed to happen”? After all he wants people to give up—to walk away from the Church in anger

How could we please God and tick off Satan in the midst of this?

Well if people in our parish decided (or St Joe’s in Strongsville)—“I’ve only been going to Mass once a week—but I’m going to start going to Mass twice a week—and I’m going to offer up that extra Mass for the Church—for priests—for our diocese—for the pope- for my family--whatever”—that could help bring the transformation the Prophet Isaiah is talking about—it would  *please God and leave Satan asking, “How did this happen?”*

What if people in our parish (or St Joe’s) decided to leave home 10 or 15 minutes early and stop by the adoration chapel and spent 10 or 15 minutes every day on their knees before Jesus before they start their day ---that could help bring about the kind of transformation that Isaiah was talking about

*It would please God –And leave Satan asking, “How did this happen?”*

What if people in St Helen’s (or St Joseph’s) say to themselves—“ I’ve only been going to confession twice a year—I’m going to start going four times a year”---that could help bring about the kind of transformation that Isaiah is talking about today—*and it would please God* **and leave Satan asking, “How did this happen?”**

What if people who rarely pray the rosary decide—“I’m going to turn off the radio in my car—and I’m going to start to pray the rosary every day on my way to work—or on my way home from work---*or better yet*—**both on my way and on my way home from work”—***that could begin to bring about the kind of transformation that Isaiah is talking about in that first reading*

And folks the rosary only takes 15 or 20 minutes-that is a wonderful way to grow closer to Jesus through Mary---it’s not that big a deal to take the time to do it—*and it would please God and leave Satan asking, “How did this happen?”*

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I hope you get my point---Satan tripped up a man we trusted—and he wants to use that to take you away from the faith— what God wants you to do— the path to holiness

*But it doesn’t have to be that way*

All of us seeing the devastating effects of sin—can use this as an opportunity—to renew our own faith—to renew our own commitment to holiness—to renew our desire to be more pleasing to God

My friends—when all is said and done—each one of us is going to take a path that either leads us closer to God—leads us to greater holiness—that leads us to seek to conquer sin in our own lives

**Or** *we’re going to take a path that makes Satan happy*—a path away from the sacraments—a path away from the community of faith—a path away from the saving grace God wants to shower on us in the Eucharist—in Reconciliation—in private prayer

We’ve seen up close and personal the devastating effects of sin—*let’s use this time to walk in the direction God wants us to walk*—let’s allow this to lead us to a deeper desire to receive and adore Jesus- an opportunity to receive His forgiveness in Reconciliation—an opportunity to re-commit ourselves to the life of prayer

My friends—if we do that we can have Satan kicking himself that his plan backfired---and we can have our God saying to the angels—“Do you see the good people of St Helens? Do you see how they reacted in the face of evil?

My friends—let’s please God—let’s grow in holiness—let’s turn the parched desert we’ve been in—into a beautiful garden of God’s grace

We can please God and give Satan a big black eye all at the same time

Let’s do just that—Amen? Amen