

Father O'Connor's Homily for 14 December 2025
Third Sunday of Advent-A

Isaiah 35: 1-6a, 10

James 5: 7-10

Matthew 11: 2-11

There was a businessman flying from New York to Los Angeles. He knew exactly how long the trip would take and brought along work to get done. Boarding the plane he had that look that said, "Don't bother me. I'm busy!" And then a mother and her little boy sat down in the seats next to him, with the boy in the middle. He tried to remain distant but the little boy kept talking to him.

The man began listening to him and found that he actually liked the boy. That whole flight he put aside his work, talked with the boy, read him stories and played games. When they arrived in Los Angeles the mother said to the gentleman, "Thank you so much for paying attention to my son. You see, his father died six months ago, and you were very kind to him."

Later on the man realized what had happened: that child had really gotten into his heart. He felt a deep satisfaction that he had opened his own heart to someone who truly needed his attention.

Children can get into hearts that have been locked for years. The Child Jesus came to enter our hearts and fill them with His love. One of His names in Scripture is "Emmanuel," a name which means "God is with us."

There was a stage play [and later the 1936 movie] entitled, "The Green Pastures." In it, God is on the stage with the Archangel Gabriel, who has his trumpet in hand. God is looking over the world and saying, "I have sent prophet after prophet, and still they won't listen." Gabriel suggests, "Lord, how about if I blow my trumpet and call an end to the whole thing on earth?" And God replies, "No, this time I'm not going to send another messenger. I'm going to send my Son to them."

And so the Son of God left His throne in heaven and became man. He is Emmanuel, "God with us." And this Child wants to enter our hearts.

This Advent season shows us that, so many times, God comes to us through some very unexpected people and in some very unexpected ways. Today, the Third Sunday of Advent, we have John the Baptist before us. And Jesus says to the crowd, "Why did you go out to the desert? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and

more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: *Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way before you.*"

John the Baptist is the greatest and last of the Old Testament prophets, pointing the way to the Messiah, to Jesus Christ, who is "God with us." But, to so many people, John was a rather unexpected messenger and in a rather unexpected place, the desert.

There was a Christmas pageant to take place in his church and young Bradley wanted a part. However, Bradley was "an accident waiting to happen." The previous year, his angel wings caught on fire and he nearly burned down the church. But the director knew that Bradley really loved Jesus with his whole heart. And she just had to give him a part.

So she decided he could be the innkeeper. All that he needed to do was open the door and deliver a line.

Everything went smoothly at the rehearsals, but then came opening night. When Mary and Joseph came to the inn, Bradley opened the door and said, "Be gone. I have no place for you."

Mary and Joseph turned to walk away. The people in the front of the church could see tears welling up in Bradley's eyes and his lower lip quivering. Then Bradley shouts to Mary and Joseph, "Wait! You can stay in my room!"

Pandemonium broke out in the church. Once again, Bradley had sabotaged the Christmas pageant. The director, after wiping away Bradley's tears and then a few of her own, quieted down the audience and said, "Perhaps this year Bradley is God's unexpected messenger to us. Because it is only when we make room in our hearts that the Christ Child can come in."

The world around us is already celebrating "the holidays," and we can run the risk of missing out on the Child who made all of this possible. After all, it is His birthday that we celebrate, and it is His coming again in glory that we look forward to.

There was a four-year-old named Sarah who had been an only-child. And then her baby brother was born. Sarah's mother and father were worried about some sibling jealousy, so they watched her carefully. One day Sarah asked for some "time alone" with her new brother. So they allowed her to go into the nursery all by herself. But they stationed themselves just outside so they could see and hear what was taking place.

Then Sarah put her face next to his and said, "Baby brother, tell me what God is like because I'm starting to forget."

So how do we find ourselves on this Third Sunday of Advent? We can be casual observers that look at the crib and say, “Isn’t that nice. See you again next year.” Or we can be like Bradley and say, “Wait! You can stay in my room.... in my heart.”

Children can draw so much out of our hearts. The Christ Child can put everything into our hearts, if we make room for Him. And as we come close to Him, like Sarah, we can whisper in His ear, “Baby Jesus, tell me what God is like because I don’t want to forget.”