

Homily for
The Fourth Sunday of Advent
Sunday December 21st, 2008

***“Jesus Came to Comfort the Disturbed
and to Disturb the Comfortable”***

Well, here we are just a few days away from Christmas. I invite you to stop for just a moment and ask yourself how you're feeling right now: tired, rushed, stressed? Are you feeling happy, or excited? Maybe sad? In our local community and elsewhere, as you ride around, you will see signs that say, ***“Jesus is the Reason for the Season.”*** How has this season been for you thus far?

I have often heard it said that, ***“Jesus came to comfort the disturbed and to disturb the comfortable.”*** While the word “disturb” seems like a negative one, it is very appropriate for describing what Jesus came to do. None of us likes being interrupted, none of us likes being disturbed:

- ⊥ if you're sleeping really good and something (or someone) wakes you up
- ⊥ if you're trying to study for an exam (that you have to do well on)
- ⊥ if you're having a moment of peace but the phone keeps ringing

There are a lot of interruptions that we do not like. There are a lot of disturbances that are not good for us. They often take away a moment that we desperately need.

This, however, is not the kind of “disturbing” that Jesus came for. Sometimes we need to be disturbed, because sometimes we get a little too comfortable, a little too relaxed, a little too neglectful. When we say, ***“Jesus came to comfort the disturbed,”*** we know easily what that means: to cure the sick, to heal the brokenhearted, to lift up the poor. But when we say, ***“he came to disturb the comfortable,”*** we might wonder who, then, did he come for in that regard, in that sense. Well, guess what: he came for us.

You might recall our theme for Advent last year, ***“embrace the grace.”*** One of the graces we spoke of was the “grace of interruption.” We talked about how, even in the interruptions and disturbances of life, we can find grace and blessing. (I shared with you how my experience of illness was an experience that led me to re-think a lot of things, that, even though it was a huge interruption in my life, it “disturbed me” in a way that was good. I came through it taking less for granted and trying really hard to live a healthier lifestyle. Just after my diagnosis 4 years ago, someone asked me, ***“so what do you think this will do to your attitude about life and God?”*** My response was, ***“I'm not sure. I thought I had a good one.”*** Little

did I know how much better it could be. I don't believe God caused the disease, but I do believe that I needed to be disturbed, in the good sense.)

Where do you and I need to allow Christ to comfort us right now, and where do we need to allow him to disturb us? We all have places in our lives where we've grown a little too relaxed. In our first reading today from the *Second Book of Samuel*, we find King David sitting comfortably in his home reflecting not only on his life but on the possibility that he may not have been "remembering" all that God had done for him. Through Nathan the Prophet, David is reminded: "***the Lord your God has done all these things for you. He has kept you safe and alive, defeated your enemies, and brought you to this place. And, not only that, he will continue to bless you and your ancestors for years to come.***" He even uses the word, "disturb," and says, "***their lives will be disturbed no more.***" King David, it seems, needed to be disturbed from his comfort, from his "forgetting."

What do you and I need to be disturbed from? Consider these words:

- ⊥ Forgetful
- ⊥ Preoccupied
- ⊥ Arrogant
- ⊥ Lazy

Are there any places in our lives where these words apply?

- ⊥ A Relationship
- ⊥ A Bad Habit
- ⊥ Our Health

If "Advent" means, "***the coming of something very important,***" then maybe that "something" (for us) needs to simply be a new way of hearing God, a "hearing" that allows us to be disturbed from our old ways, so that we can be happier, healthier, holier. Jesus came to "***comfort the disturbed and to disturb the comfortable.***" Let Him comfort you where you need it the most, but let him also disturb you. That kind of disturbance is a good one.