

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent

So, I was walking down 6<sup>th</sup> avenue on my way to rehearsal for Christmas Revelations at the Sheen Center and I was carrying this trumpet and this angel. Of course, 6<sup>th</sup> avenue was busy and bustling so no one paid any attention. Even when I got on the Subway to Bleecker St, no one looked up from their smartphones or if they did we never got a second glance. Only in NY would you walk on the streets and ride in the subway with a trumpet of this size with an angel on top and not attract attention! But what if I put the trumpet to my lips and...(Musical trumpet flourish). Then I might have gotten someone's attention or not. What you just heard my friends was a FLOURISH! BTW This trumpet and this angel play important roles in the story of Harold the Herald which I heartily hope you will hear when you hasten to see Christmas Revelations at the Sheen Center. BTW did you know that the Sheen Center was originally a Jesuit Parish in the 1900's. It was a mission of Xavier.

(Flourish again) Oh, yes FLOURISH. A flourish as a noun is a bold or extravagant gesture or action, made especially to attract the attention of others. And who in the scriptures is bolder or more extravagant in gesture than John the Baptist. Look at how he dresses, and his diet, and listen to his words Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. You brood of vipers. Even now the ax lies at the root of the tree! I am baptizing you with water for repentance but he will baptize you with the holy spirit and with fire.

Yes, John captures our attention. He is "living on the edge". A friend told me about a tee shirt he saw with someone sitting on a globe. The text was "if you're not living on the edge, you're taking up too much space!". John was someone who was living on the edge. Calling people to change, to repent, to notice God's kingdom coming in the one who would come after him." And John was a herald. A herald as you know is someone who "announces" important things. A herald is a messenger. That's why we speak of Herald Angels since Angel is from the Greek for Messenger. By the way, that's Hark, the Herald Angel :-0 JB is heralding the good news of God's kingdom, although from John's lips it doesn't sound like "good"

news. Sounds pretty bleak and scary. But then John is living on the edge. Where the one who is to come after him, Jesus is living in the center. In the center of God's heart and love for the world.

(Musical Flourish) So that's flourish as a noun. There's also flourish as a verb which means "to grow in a healthy environment". To grow vigorously. Our peace Garden is "flourishing". Last week it was only green but it has already begun to blossom. When I asked Michael and Angel the designers if they knew that one of the major images of the Isaiah scripture was a tree stump "a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse they said no. It was just an idea that sprouted for them. To have the 4 advent candles resting on tree stumps. Hmm. Could this be the Holy Spirit? Could Angel be an angel and not know it?



The Isaiah advent texts are filled with flourishing as are the psalms. Justice shall flourish in his time and fullness of peace forever. And there is the image of the peaceable kingdom that we hear. The wolf shall be the guest of the lamb. The leopard will lie down with the kid. You've got to be kidding! Who could imagine peace like that? A time and place where natural enemies become friends? Can you imagine that? Probably not. If

you are an adult, jaded by world-weariness but if you're a KID? No Kidding.  
A child can imagine enemies getting along. (lamb and eagle puppets)  
Sorry I didn't have my lion with me!

Hi, my name is lamb chop.  
Mine is Elohim  
Will you be my guest?  
Why certainly!

Is this why Jesus says you have to become like a child to enter the kingdom of God? Can we be truly child-like and enter into God's imagination for the world?

I would be remiss if I didn't speak of Francis Xavier on his feast day. Francis was a man with a mission, with flourish like John the Baptist. And so much has flourished because of him; parishes, schools, ministries of all kinds.