

DECEMBER 6 2025 FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL

In the first reading of Isaiah, we have the beautiful reading about the kingdom, actually, of the new Jerusalem. Everything will be okay, and there will be the— it starts to emerge that a Messiah— a Messiah will come who will take care of everything, and it's proved to Isaiah— so it was written, actually, during the time when the Syrians were really a threat to the people of Jerusalem. And later on, of course, we have the Babylonians coming and making a mess of it. And they really could see, the Jewish people, that they had sinned, and that they needed help, and that they needed a Messiah, a leader who could— could restore them.

And then we go to the gospel reading, of course, the one who is restoring is Jesus. Jesus Christ, who is going around healing so many and because of so much works, he missions the 12 disciples. And, of course, Jesus receives his mission from God Himself, God the Father, and he missions the 12 disciples. And in turn, through the 12 disciples, we are missioned. Of course, I am missioned through a Bishop who ordained me but we all are missioned, because we are a priestly people and through baptism, we were baptised, priest, prophet— priest, prophet, and king, so we are a priestly people, and we're really all missioned through Jesus Christ.

And we have received freely and to give freely. And that is so important, to give freely of what we have received. And each one of us, we can look in our lives, and how blessed we are. How we have received so much of us. And it's so easy, of course, especially in our own society, to look at the negative and say, "If only this or only that." But forgetting about how many gifts we have received.

And today, on the memorial of Saint Nicholas, it's also about giving. And actually, it's interesting. We really know very little about Saint Nicholas of Myra. Very little. We know that he was a Bishop, and we know that he was on the first Council of Nicaea and we have the Nicene Creed thanks to the first Council of Nicaea, but for the rest, we don't really know much about him. There is a lot of folklore, and one of them is that he gave gifts to three poor girls, who, if they— a dowry so they would not be sold in prostitution. And so there, a tradition of giving evolved from that. And it is interesting how that just changes through the years.

So initially, actually, in the Netherlands, of course, I am Dutch. You might hear my accent. We had Sinterklaas, which is Saint Nicholas in Dutch. And who would come, actually, on the Eve of Saint Nicholas, so, December the 5th eve, he would come. And there is a whole tradition. And he would come from Spain on a boat with his white horse, and he had his Black Peter, his helpers with him, and so on. But that has changed, and the early Dutch immigrants to New York, which was New Amsterdam, they brought that tradition of Sinterklaas with them. And there again, in 1844, a certain Clement Clarke Moore published a poem named— called "A Visit from Saint Nicholas." And it's a lengthy poem so I cannot read it to you, but one line in there, "But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer, with a little older driver, so lively and quick, I knew in a moment that it must be Saint Nick." And it just goes on, that Saint Nick and the sleigh, he would deliver presents on Christmas Eve. And so there we have the tradition of Saint Nicholas on Christmas Eve that started in the 19th century.

But it's this— this giving of self, and that's so important. And that's one thing we should not forget. I really mourn how things have turned out in our society. Same in the Netherlands with Sinterklaas, or here. Because

most people, by far most people, forget that it is about giving of self. Saint Nicholas of Myra, he gave of himself. He was looking around him and to the needs of the people around him. And so he was very generous, and he would— he would gift, as tradition has, in secret. No big— no big "look here what I have done for the world!" Just gently, in secret, giving. And this is such a beautiful example for us. To— when we see someone who needs assistance, to help. But to steer away from all this secular society thing about biggest gift and how much we can put on our credit card and so on, because it's not helpful. It just takes us away from what is important, and the important thing is giving freely in the tradition of Saint Nicholas.

Amen.