

In India, there is a story - perhaps it's more of a parable - about six blind men and an elephant. Maybe you've heard it before ... or maybe you've heard the poem written by American Poet John Godfrey Saxe.

The premise is that each of the six blind men approach the elephant from a different perspective. One grabs a leg and reports that an elephant is like a pillar; another feels the tail says an elephant is like a rope; one feels the trunk says the elephant is like a snake; one feels the ear says the elephant is like a fan; another feels the side and says the elephant is like a wall; and the last who feels the tusk says the elephant is like a spear.

Each of them had a perspective, but none of them had the whole story.

In today's Gospel, we hear that John the Baptist sends his disciples to figure out who Jesus is. Now, remember - John was the one who baptized Jesus, saw the Holy Spirit descend on Jesus like a dove, heard the voice of God the Father call Jesus His Son. And John himself called Jesus "*the Lamb of God.*"

So what's going on here? Realize that at this point, John is locked away in prison, and we can only imagine what challenges he is experiencing in a first century middle-eastern prison cell. John's faith, which came so easily with the vision of the Spirit, and hearing God's voice ... is being tested. So he sends his disciples to check up on what he once was so sure of. Perhaps, too, some of his disciples were giving him bits and pieces of what Jesus was saying or doing ... and John wanted a better perspective ... that is, John wanted to get the whole story.

In the First Reading, Israel is overrun by the Assyrians. The Prophet Isaiah gives them a vision of what will happen when the Messiah - the Anointed One - (the Christ) - will come. And this is exactly the message Jesus sends back to John.

Yet this restoration ... this transformation by God's grace to a new sort of wholeness ... which has never been seen before ... is more than a prosperous farm in the desert ... or a miraculous hospital for the infirm.

Rather, as St. James reminds us in the Epistle, it is also an inner transformation ... a transformation of our hearts ... and our minds ... and our souls.

A key thing to remember here, is that God doesn't zap us into submission, but rather He patiently waits for us to catch up to His way of doing things, to become aware of His presence in our lives and in ourselves ... God waits for us to give Him permission ... to allow Him ... to change our hearts, and our minds, and our souls.

This is the 'big picture' of salvation ... the 'whole story' of holiness. And we know that the promises God made throughout Sacred Scripture are fulfilled in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ. That is why we celebrate this Four Week period of spiritual preparation each year in anticipation of the Great Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord ... that is, Christmas.

We need to take this time ... so that through prayer, penance, and sacrifice ... we might be strengthened in Faith, Hope, and Love ... so that we can better persevere through the hardships of this life ... and wait on the Lord with patience, and with forbearance.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... let us pray for the graces to be patient in waiting on the Lord ... and for the Lord's time ... for the things we desire to receive from Him. And let us also pray that we might be made ready to receive the wholeness ... the holiness ... the whole package of Salvation in God through Jesus Christ. As we pass the half-way point, and head into the 'home stretch' of this time of prayer and preparation ... this Advent 2013 ... may we accept God's grace to help us to be transformed from who we are ... into the holy people that God has called us to become in Christ Jesus Our Lord.