

Wednesday 2nd December 2020

Advent, Wednesday of 1st week

Reading: Lk.1,8-17

v.12 *"When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear."*

The effect of the angelic visitation on Zechariah was fear. This was the reaction when he realised the truth of what he was in the presence of. Is that to be wondered at? Must straw not fear when in the presence of fire? Must the messenger of God's coming not cause fear in one who was any true sense of God's holiness and majesty and his own unworthiness?

Yet we have made of 'angels' harmless, cuddly agents of comfort and cosiness who could not possibly instil a sense of terror and fear. And this is symptomatic, surely, of an even more consequential idea – that God need not be feared: that we would abide, of course, should he decide to come, that he is not utterly opposed to all impurity and unrighteousness.

But Zechariah's fear, while not declared to be wrong is nevertheless, removed by the words: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah..." And he has his place in the coming of God.

There is a place in the coming of God for the fear of God in those to whom he comes. This is said of him who embodies our true humanity: *"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD – and he will delight in the fear of the LORD."* (Is.11,1-3)