

**Advent Reconciliation Service
December 18, 2009**

Readings: Isaiah 55:1-11; Luke 15:1-11

Joy in Heaven

The diocese gave us these readings for our Advent Reconciliation Service this year. We have our first reading from the prophet Isaiah; we hear a lot from him all during Advent. We are reminded tonight that God's ways are different than the ways of man. And as we gather here this evening it is an excellent opportunity for us to stop and reflect on how often we ignore God's ways and go with the flow of our society. The Advent season and this reconciliation service, in particular, are a good time to seek out Jesus. We look forward to celebrating His birthday of course, but we also look to when He will come again in judgment. And so we seek to know Him better and to seek out the path that He wants us to travel so that some day we will see Him face-to-face. We don't want to travel a path that does not lead to heaven. And as we journey we admit that we have in some ways strayed from the straight path. And so we come to this service tonight much as Isaiah admonishes us: *"Let the scoundrel forsake his way, and the wicked man his thoughts; let him turn to the Lord for mercy; to our God, who is generous in forgiving."*

God is generous in forgiving, but first we must repent. We must admit that in some ways we have gone astray. In some ways we are like the lost sheep that Jesus talks about in the gospel passage. And because we are here together for that purpose tonight, there is much joy in heaven. Jesus said: *"I tell you,...there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance."*

There is joy because we are willing to admit our sinfulness and to repent and promise to try to avoid sinning again. We pray for the graces from God to help us with that promise. We pray that our hearts will be purified because blessed are those with pure hearts; they will see God. And that should be our goal during Advent; to see God better both in the Christ child but also in every one we meet. If we love God we will love our neighbor.

Deacon Joe Hulway