

Second Sunday of Advent - Lectionary: 5

Reading 1 - IS 40:1-5, 9-11

Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her service is at an end, her guilt is expiated; indeed, she has received from the hand of the LORD double for all her sins.

A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God! Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low; the rugged land shall be made a plain, the rough country, a broad valley. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken. Go up on to a high mountain, Zion, herald of glad tidings; cry out at the top of your voice, Jerusalem, herald of good news! Fear not to cry out and say to the cities of Judah: Here is your God! Here comes with power the Lord GOD, who rules by his strong arm; here is his reward with him, his recompense before him. Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs, carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care.

Responsorial Psalm - PS 85:9-10-11-12, 13-14 - R. (8) Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

Reading 2 - 2 PT 3:8-14

Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day. The Lord does not delay his promise, as some regard "delay," but he is patient with you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a mighty roar and the elements will be dissolved by fire, and the earth and everything done on it will be found out. Since everything is to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be, conducting yourselves in holiness and devotion, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved in flames and the elements melted by fire. But according to his promise we await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you await these things, be eager to be found without spot or blemish before him, at peace.

Gospel - MK 1:1-8

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: *Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. A voice of one crying out in the desert: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths."* John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. John was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. And this is what he proclaimed: "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

This is a special time for us to remember with deep gratitude, that “God so loved the world, he sent his only Son...” It is a season to reflect on the impact of the Incarnation for us personally, so that we can authentically celebrate Christmas for what it is, the beginning of our salvation. So, today’s Gospel prompts us to consider the words of John the Baptist as they apply to ourselves. In our gratitude for our salvation, are we living lives that are in fact preparing us for that moment when Christ comes again.

Our Advent reflections must lead us to evaluate our relationship with God, our spiritual health, and identify the areas of ourselves, our lives that need conversion / adjustments. As we do this, we must bear in mind that the coming of the Lord does not fill his friends with fear and anxiety but rather with joyful anticipation. The fruit of Living every day the Way in Truth of Jesus is a real interior peace that makes us ready to meet him at any time. “Therefore, beloved, since you await these things, be eager to be found without spot or blemish before him, at peace,” as St. Peter says.

We are also reminded by St. Paul that God is patient with us, God wants us to be able to in right and grace filled relationship when Christ returns. “The Lord does not delay his promise, as some regard “delay,” but he is patient with you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” And he gives us the sober truth we need to know, that we don’t have all the time in the world. The coming can be very sudden, “Therefore, beloved, since you await these things, be eager to be found without spot or blemish before him, at peace.” Living holy and saintly lives every day and increasingly so.

The Gospel also becomes a reminder to us that in our gratitude and Joy we must be heralds of the day of salvation for others, just as John was for his time. “Go up on a high mountain, joyful messenger to Zion. Shout with a loud voice, joyful messenger to Jerusalem,” says Isaiah in the First Reading today. “Shout without fear, say to the towns of Judah, ‘Here is your God’.” Yes, that is what each of us should be doing – perhaps beginning with members of our own families! Tell people about Him who “is like a shepherd feeding his flock, gathering lambs in his arms”. Each of us can reach people that no one else can

reach – our family members, relatives, work colleagues and other people who may come into our life.

However, like John, we must be credible in our witness and testimony if others are going to listen to us and respond to God. John was a man of God and the people admired and trusted him as a person of holiness and integrity. He taught them, with charity and uncompromising truth. He made them aware of their need for salvation and called on them to “Repent” and believe. Not just to be contrite of heart for sins, but to do much more than that, to change their ways. To “repent” in the Gospel involves a radical transformation in our way of living.

During this time of our waiting and being perfected, as St. Cyril of Alexandria preached, we must endure and persevere if we are to attain the truth and freedom we have been allowed to hope for; faith and hope are the very meaning of our being Christians, but if faith and hope are to bear their fruit, patience is necessary.

Paul also warns us not to grow weary in good works through impatience, not to be distracted or overcome by temptations and so give up in the midst of our pilgrimage of praise and glory, and allow our past good deeds to count for nothing because what was begun falls short of completion. *Therefore while we have time, let us do good to all, but especially to those who are of the household of the faith. But let us not grow weary in doing good, for we shall reap our reward in due season.*

Finally, the Apostle, speaking of charity, unites it with endurance and patience. *Charity, he says, is always patient and kind; it is not jealous, is not boastful, is not given to anger, does not think evil, loves all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.* He shows that charity can be steadfast and persevering because it has learned how to endure all things. And in another place he says: *Bear with one another lovingly, striving to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* He shows that neither unity nor peace can be maintained unless the brethren cherish each other with mutual forbearance and preserve the bond of harmony by means of patience.