

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT YEAR C

Readings Malachi 3:1- 4, Philippians 1: 3-11, Luke 3: 1- 6

Theme: The Joy of Salvation

"Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his path..... And all nations shall see the salvation of God."

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

My dear friends, need I say more about the season we have just started than the injunction of St John the Baptist as it appears in today's Gospel. The quotation epitomises the demand on you and I as believers to prepare for the coming of our saviour, Jesus Christ.

It then follows that on this second Sunday of Advent, we reflect on the joy of salvation. That joy which distinguishes believers from unbelievers. The readings of today reflect the preparation for this joy, and suggests how we prepare in order to find ourselves ready when the saviour arrives

In the Old Testament reading from the prophet Malachi, God promised that he was sending his messenger to prepare the way before he arrives. The messenger will speak without fear telling the people what is expected of them, he will purify the nation in readiness for His coming. The Psalm is the Canticle which is familiar to all of us - the Benedictus. Here the Psalmist praises God for his promises to redeem his people.

In the epistle, Paul in his letter to the Christians at Philippi thanked God for what he had done and expressed satisfaction in the fact that God will fulfil his promises to save his people Himself. Paul was full of joy because of what God had done in the life of Christians. The Philippians were Paul's pride and crown for he was the one who brought them to Christ. It was Paul's prayer for his people that their love would grow everyday. Paul saw the life of every Christian as a sacrifice prepared to offer to Jesus. This is a similar message to those he gave to the Christians in Rome (Romans 12:1), when he asked them to present their bodies as a living sacrifice for Christ. The coming of Christ will be like that of a King and people should prepare to meet him and present him a gift. The only gift Christ desires from us is ourselves and our lives.

In the Gospel, to Luke the emergence of John the Baptist constituted the timing of events in history. Luke is careful to include the full list of Roman and Jewish officials in the time of John the Baptist. He quotes Isaiah 40:3-5 which is about the preparation of the people before the arrival of their king. John here is regarded as the courier of the King. But the preparation he insisted on was the preparation of heart and life. Within the wilderness of our human sinfulness the voice of John the Baptist speaks an Advent message of repentance. It is an invitation to take time out and let the Spirit of God get into work in our lives in order to make a pathway through all that hinders us from growing in his love. For this to happen, only one thing is necessary and that is that we accept his call to repentance. Repentance is not just a mild regret for the wrong doings of the past but a longing for a change of heart and a turning away from the attitudes that constantly bring us back to the repetition of the same old failings.

Serious reflection is needed on what improvements we must make in our lives. Yes it is not easy to make changes. Old habits die hard. Most times, we find it very difficult to leave the comfort of our positions. The familiar is always easy to deal with.

Today we hear the voice of John the Baptist, the voice of the messenger that is sent ahead of his coming. It called 2 thousand years ago. My dear friends, that voice crying in the wilderness is still crying to day. How do we prepare for the coming of God into our world? The answer could be found in Luke's conclusion of the Gospel of today. Every valley should be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough ways made smooth. What are these valleys that shall be filled? What are these mountains to be made low? This is a question each of us will answer for himself/herself. All of us are aware that today in our world, life is a struggle. Have you forgotten what Paul said about not doing the good he ought to do?

This is a time of enormous joy and expectations; we are waiting for the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ. There is a joyous expectation because our salvation is near. Salvation is one of the great themes of Advent. Today a great cry goes forth from the liturgy "Prepare the way for the Lord, make his paths straight. Let every valley be filled in, every hill be levelled, winding ways be straightened and rough roads made smooth, and all humanity shall see the salvation of God. The joy of salvation does not come to us by flashing a magic wand or pressing a Christmas button,

Salvation is free yet it is not cheap. We have to work for it breaking the chains we have bound ourselves with. We must dispose our hearts to receive him. At this time, we should cast aside the selfishness that stops us doing a kind act, the resentment that blocks communication, the falsehood that betrays trust, the pride that precludes true regard for others and the communal prejudice that can destroy a communication. So John the Baptist was right in repeating Isaiah's call to make ready the way of the Lord. The least we could do in this advent is not to put any spiritual obstacles in the way of the coming of the Lord.

The joy of salvation is not the private property of any Christian. In effect, the joy lies in sharing that joy with other people. Hence we are called to bring this joy to others by promoting peace and justice in the world, peace and justice in the world begins in our own homes, in our work places and in our dealings with other people.

In this season of Advent each of us must put on the amour of Christ. Let us forgive those who offend us as we would not like to leave a dirty linen in the sitting room when expecting an important personality.

As we continue the celebration, let us ask God for the grace to stand firm so that when he comes, he would not find us wanting.

In the name of the father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

