

Homily of Second Sunday of Advent Year B, 2020

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11; Psalm 85:9-14; 2 Peter 3:8-14; Mark 1:1-8

The first reading begins with the following words of consolation from Prophet Isaiah, “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...” Isaiah continues: “Here is your God! He 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 arm he gathers the lambs, carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care.” These words of consolation were given to the Israelites in exile in Babylon. At that time, many of them had lost hope that they would ever return to their homeland. Isaiah encouraged them not to lose hope. He assured them that their suffering was at an end. Isaiah’s prophesy was fulfilled when God used the Persian pagan king, Cyrus, to set the people of Israel free and have them return to their homeland.

It is our prayer that these words of consolation come to fulfillment for many people who hear them today. It is our prayer that their hope may not fail and that they may be released from their present kinds of exiles. The word exile represents various kinds of difficulties and afflictions.

The first reading puts us in the spirit of Advent season when we see Jesus as the One who expiates our guilt and gives us comfort. He comes with power. He is the Good Shepherd; he feeds us, his flock. He gathers us, carrying us in his bosom, and leads with care.

The first reading, further, puts us in the spirit of Advent when we are able to identify in our life, valleys that need to be filled in, mountains and hills that need to be made low, rough and rugged land that need to be made plain. Valleys, mountains, hills, rough, and rugged land are our sinful life that we need to repent from and our ugly past that we need to put behind us. If we do these, the glory of the Lord shall be revealed in us, as Isaiah prophesied.

The Gospel tells us that when John the Baptist preached the message of repentance, people of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem acknowledged their sins and went to him for baptism. In the same way, we are invited to accept the message of repentance, acknowledge our sins and draw close to Jesus who baptizes us with the Holy Spirit. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed in us.

St. Peter reminds us in the second reading that the Lord is patient with us, “not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” God, in his goodness and mercy, does not treat us according to our sins and mistakes (Psalm 103:10). He gives us opportunities to learn our lessons and come to our senses and mend our ways and be saved from preventable dangers. Fortunately, some people give testimonies of waking up to the opportunities God gave them. Sadly, and unfortunately, some people waste the opportunities God gave them. May we not be among those who live in regret and agony of memories of missed opportunities. May we, rather, be among those who continually bless God because we did not waste the opportunities God gave us.

The second purple candle we lit today symbolizes peace. May we make a fruitful Advent journey so that Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), gives us peace, not as the world gives (John 14:27). May he give us the peace that surpasses all understanding which guards our hearts and minds (Philippians 4:17) during these difficult times. May the peace of Christ empower us to make peace with those we have difficult relationship with. May the peace of Christ energize us to be channels of peace wherever we are. Amen.

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