

## Homily of Second Sunday of Advent Year C, 2021

Baruch 5:1-9; Psalm 126:1-6; Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11; Luke 3:1-6

We light the Candle of Peace on the second Sunday of Advent. We pray that the preparation and the celebration of this year's Christmas bring peace to our hearts, homes, communities, country and the world. So much violence is going on in our country and in many parts of the world, causing unimaginable suffering on people. Since, we Christians, believe in the power of prayer, we continue to pray for peace in our country and in all the troubled parts of the world. On our individual level, let us try to be instruments of peace wherever we find ourselves. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

The first reading is Prophet Baruch's prophecy of hope and encouragement to the Jewish people who were in exile in Babylon. Not only that God would return them to their land, God was going to restore the city of Jerusalem and make it new. Baruch prophesied that God would remember his people; robe of mourning and misery would be taken off from them and be replaced with cloak of justice. God was going to command lofty mountain be made low and age-old depths and gorges be filled to ground level to make the return of the people of Israel easy. On the way through which they would return to their land, God would create forest and fragrant kind trees to provide shade for them. Baruch prophesied that God would lead Israel in joy by the light of his glory, and his justice would accompany them.

We pray that this prophecy be fulfilled in the life of many who are in misery and wearing mourning robe. May the mourning robe be replaced with cloak of justice. May God make a way where there is no way. May God protect and provide, and in his mercy shine the light of his glory on his children and restore their joy. Amen.

Our reflection on the importance of the spiritual preparation for Christmas which we began last Sunday continues today. While the first reading is our prayer of deliverance from affliction, the second reading and the gospel are God's invitation to us to repentance. The gospel invites us, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and rough ways made smooth" (3:4-5). The way and paths of the Lord are the way and paths through which God comes and dwells in our hearts and lives. The mountains, hills, winding roads and rough ways are our weaknesses, excuses, resistances, and sins that restrict God's entrance and dwelling.

St. Paul writes in the second reading, "I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). These are words of encouragement from St. Paul to the Philippian Church community. Not only that the Philippian Christians were persecuted, the Christians themselves were disunited. St. Paul wrote to encourage them to persevere in the good work God began in them.

The day of Jesus Christ is the day Jesus Christ will take us to our eternal home. But while still in this life, God has begun good work in each of us. God does not continue the good work all alone without our generous participation. St. Augustine of Hippo says, "He who created us without our help will not save us without our consent." In the same understanding, Algernon Sidney says, "God helps those who help themselves." We pray that we may cooperate with God's graces so that the trials and challenges of life do not hinder the good work God began in us from continuing.

Some people bring to an abrupt end the good works God began in them. In Revelation 2:4-5, we read, "I hold this against you: you have lost the love you had at first. Realize how far you have fallen. Repent, and do the works you did at first."

Some people, due to lack of knowledge, perception, and discernment miss opportunities of good work God gave them. St. Paul in the second reading prays for each of us that our "love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value..." (Philippians 1:9-11).

Let us pray:

Gracious God, in my life are weaknesses, sins, temptations, trials, and challenges. They are the valleys that need to be filled, mountains and hills that need to be made low, winding roads that need to be made straight, and rough ways that need to be made smooth. Through the graces of this sacred season of your favor, grant me knowledge, perception, and discernment not to fail at my moments of valleys, mountains, hills, winding roads, and rough ways, so that you and I will continue the good work you began in me; until the day of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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