

Homily of Second Sunday of Advent, Year C, 2024

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

As 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 lives, homes, communities, country, and the world. There is so much violence around us 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. On our individual level, let us become 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 lives of many who are in misery and in grief. May God replace yokes of injustice with cloaks of justice. May he lead those who find themselves in valleys of darkness and shadows of death by the light of his glory. We pray with today's Psalm that those who go forth with weeping come back rejoicing (Psalm 126:6). We pray with Psalm 90:15, "Give us gladness in proportion to our former misery! Replace the evil years with good." Amen.

Our reflection on the importance of the spiritual preparation for Christmas, which we began last Sunday, continues today. While the first reading and the Psalm are prayers and promises of deliverance from affliction, the second reading and the gospel are invitations 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" (Luke 3:4-5). The way and paths of the Lord are the way and paths through which God comes to dwell in our lives. The mountains, hills, winding roads, and rough ways are our weaknesses, excuses, resistances, and sins that prevent 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 were words of encouragement from St. Paul to the Philippian Christian community. Not only that the Philippian Christians were persecuted for being believers in Christ by the powers that were, the Christians themselves persecuted one another with disunity. Many times, the problem is not external enemies but enmity within. St. Paul wrote to encourage them to persevere in God's good work until the coming of Christ.

We are all God's instruments of good work. There is no vacation from doing God's good work until the day Jesus Christ takes us to our eternal home. God's good work does not continue without our generous partnership with God. For some reasons, some people discontinue the good work God does through 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." We pray that we may continue to cooperate with God's graces so that trials and challenges of life do not hinder the good work God is doing through us. St. Paul advises us in Galatians 6:9, "Let us not grow tired of doing good."

Sometimes, God sets out doing good work in us, but we frustrate or destroy the good work ourselves by our bad decisions and wrong choices. May the Holy Spirit guide us to make good decisions and right choices. Amen.

We also know that bad intentioned persons frustrate or destroy the good work God is doing in other people. We therefore pray that no human or spiritual forces hinder the good works God has begun in us. May every good work in us be brought to perfection and completion. Amen. God promises, "Every weapon fashioned against you shall fail; every tongue that brings you to trial you shall prove false. This is the lot of the servants of the Lord, their vindication from me" (Isaiah 54:17).

Finally, a recap of the second week of Advent's invitations: 1) Become instruments of peace wherever we find ourselves. 2) Allow God's entrance and dwelling into our lives by bringing our lofty mountains, age-old depths and gorges, and rough ways to ground level and by making our winding ways straight. 3) Become God's instruments of good work and not grow tired of doing good. 4) Do not frustrate or destroy God's good work in us or in others.

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