

Homily of Second Sunday of Advent Year C

In the second Sunday and the second week of Advent, we light the Candle of Peace. 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 many parts of the world and causing unimaginable suffering on people. Since we Christians believe in the power of prayer, we continue to pray for peace in all 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.

Our reflection on the importance of spiritual preparation for Christmas continues today. While the first reading is our prayer of deliverance of the afflicted to God, 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." The way and paths of the Lord are the way and paths through which God can come and dwell 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 speaks to us 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." The day of Jesus Christ is the day Jesus Christ will come to take us to our eternal home. But before that day, in each one of us is a daily and constant battle between the good work of God, and the mountains, hills, winding roads and rough ways which are the bad ways of the world and the bad work of the Evil One. This battle which began with Adam and Eve, has continued in the life of everyone. Jesus encourages us in last Sunday's Gospel, "Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations ..." (Luke 21:36). Our confidence is that we have Jesus Christ, our High Priest, who was triumphant over temptations and the Cross. He promises that he will save all those who place their hope in him (Hebrews 4:16). Jesus says, "I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world" (John 16:33).

Fr. Martin Eke, MSP