

## **Second Sunday of Advent (Year B) - Sunday December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

### **First Reading (*Isaiah 40:1-5.9-11*):**

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 expiating. Indeed, she has received from the hand of the Lord double for all her sins.

A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the Lord! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God! Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low. The rugged land shall be made a plain, the rough country, a broad valley. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Go up on to a high mountain, Zion, herald of glad tidings; cry out at the top of your voice, Jerusalem, herald of good news! Fear not to cry out and say to the cities of Judah: Here is your God! Here 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 arms he gathers the lambs, carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care.

### ***The Word of the Lord.***

### **Second Reading (*2 Peter 3:8-14*):**

Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day. The Lord does not delay his promise, as some regard "delay", but he is patient with you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a mighty roar and the elements will be dissolved by fire, and the earth and everything done on it will be found out. Since everything is to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be, conducting yourselves in holiness and devotion, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved in flames and the elements melted by fire.

But according to his promise we await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you await these things, be eager to be found without spot or blemish before him, at peace.

### ***The Word of the Lord.***

**Versicle before the Gospel (Luke 3:4.6):** Alleluia. Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. All flesh shall see the salvation of God. Alleluia!

**Gospel Text (Mark 1:1-8):**

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. A voice of one crying out in the desert: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths."

John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins.

John was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. And this is what he proclaimed: "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

***The Gospel of the Lord.***

## ***Reflections on Today's Gospel***

***“John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance”***

By Fr. Faust Bailo (*Toronto, Canada*)

Today, as the curtain of the divine drama rises, we can already hear someone shouting: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths” (Mk 1,3). Today we meet John the Baptist as he sets the stage for Jesus' coming.

Some people thought John himself was the Messiah. He spoke like the prophets of old, saying that people must turn from sin to avoid punishment, and turn to God to experience his mercy. But this is a message for all times and places and John spoke it with particular urgency. So, a stream of people, from Jerusalem and from all over Judea, flowed into the wilderness to hear John preach.

Why did John attract so many men and women? Sure, he blasted Herod and the religious leaders, a daring act that fascinated the common people. But he also had strong words for the people as well. They too were sinners and needed to repent. And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River. Hence, John the Baptist captivated them because they understood the message of true repentance he was trying to convey. A repentance that was more than just confession of sin—in itself a long step forward and a beautiful one indeed! But repentance based on the belief that only God can both forgive and erase, both settle the debt and clear away the debris of our souls, straighten up our crooked ways.

“Do not waste this time of mercy offered by God”, Saint Gregory the Great says. Do not waste this time of embracing the purifying love offered to us, we can say to ourselves as the time of Advent unfolds before us.

Are we ready to straighten the paths for our Lord this Advent? Could we make this the time for a truer, more searching confession in our lives? John called for sincerity, sincerity with oneself, and abandonment to God's mercy. In doing so he helped people to live for God, to understand that living is a matter of fighting to open up the paths of virtue and letting God's grace vivify their soul with his joy.