

Our God Is Coming. Second Sunday Of Advent, Year B,
Dec.6, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters, today is the Second Sunday of Advent. Like the first Sunday of Advent, it speaks about the coming of the Lord emphasizing the role of St John the Baptist, the precursor of the Lord Jesus. Do you sometimes feel that talk about the coming of the Lord is redundant or a cliché?

In the world today, people who do not have faith or practice any religion may become cynical about the coming of the Lord. Do not join them and do not let their skeptical attitude distress you. "In the last days, mocking, sneering men who are ruled by their passions will arrive on the scene. They will ask: "Where is that promised coming of his? Our forefathers have been laid to rest, but everything stays just as it was when the world was created" (2 Peter 3: 3-4).

There is also a mindset that thinks the Lord is slow in fulfilling his promise, "In the Lord's eyes, one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years are as a day. The Lord does not delay in keeping his promise-though some might consider it "delay." Rather, he shows you generous patience, since he wants none to perish but all to come to repentance. The day of the Lord will come like a thief" (2 Peter 3:8-9). Do not let it catch you unprepared.

The first reading today is from Isaiah (40:1-5, 9-11). It opens with words of utter tenderness from God. "Comfort, give comfort to my people," says your God. Speak tenderly

to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her service is at end, her guilt is expiated, indeed she has received from the hand of the Lord double for all her sins" (Isaiah 40:1-2).

One may wonder what was at stake here. This message came to a people who had known the horrors of exile and captivity. The calamity came because they preferred to follow the ways of the world ("Pro-Babylonian policy") rather than trusting in God. On a global level, it is an announcement that our Savior is near at hand. It continues the theme of the coming of the Lord heralded in the First Sunday of Advent. How is this miraculous and auspicious event going to happen? Yahweh, Adonai, the Holy One raised up, a precursor, the last of the all the prophets to point out the Savior of the world. John the Baptist born in a miraculous way to Zechariah and Elizabeth who were advanced in years is the precursor. He is the "Elijah come-back" (Matthew 11:14, 17:10-13). John wore clothing made of camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey" (Matthew 3:4,2 Kgs 1:8; Zechariah 13:4). That was the exact way Elijah dressed. John's job description as we see in the first reading is: To be the voice in the desert that cries, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God. Every valley shall be filled in, rugged lands are to be plain. Every valley shall be filled. Then the glory of the Lord shall appear and everybody can see it" (isaiah 40:4-5). **By indicating that this voice is to cry out in the desert, the Holy Spirit is telling all men that a new exodus was about to happen. You remember how Moses led the people of God out of slavery to**

freedom. Well, the new Moses, the Savior John would announce has come to lead all of humanity to a new Promised Land - heaven.

What are the mountains, valleys, and waste land that need to be taken care of? They are our habitual sins, bad habits, voluntary imperfections and weaknesses. These include everything in our lives that blurs our vision of the Savior and takes away from our dignity and calling as the sons and daughters of God. We can see this clearly in how John addressed his audience.

John's marching order was to cry out that all flesh is grass, and they are like the flower of the field. The grass withers and the flowers wilts. The Word of God stands for ever" (Isaiah 40:6-8). What does this mean? It is that the visible world is temporal and is passing away. Our salvation is not in the creation of our hands. It is God who is his Word. This is why John calls us to repentance - to puncture the bubbles of our human sufficiency without God. John invites us to repentance. John's first message is "Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. He does this by proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Baptism means total immersion into the cleansing water of repentance. What are we to repent from? They are things that will hinder us from reaching heaven, the destination of the new Exodus. Peter, the first Pope asked - What sort of person ought you to be conducting yourselves in holiness, devotion, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God (2 Peter 3:11)? The answer is - "Be eager to be found without spot or blemish before him (2 Peter 3:14).

