



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 9th December 2012 - The Second Sunday of Advent

1 Relax & Remember

Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this scripture our Lord is truly present.** Then read the Gospel, preferably aloud and slowly, and pay attention to any words that stand out. If any do, meditate on them for a few minutes and be invited into a dialogue with God.



2 Read

Taken from the Gospel for 9th December 2012 (Luke 3:1-6): The Baptist's Message

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar's reign, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of the lands of Ituraea and Trachonitis, Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the pontificate of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. He went through the whole Jordan district proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the sayings of the prophet Isaiah: "A voice cries in the wilderness; prepare a way for the Lord; make his paths straight. Every valley will be filled in, every mountain and hill be laid low; winding ways will be straightened and rough roads made smooth. And all mankind shall see the salvation of God."

3 Reflect

After spending a few minutes considering this Gospel, continue by reading Fr Henry Wansbrough's reflection.

Each year the two middle Sundays of Advent centre on John the Baptist, preparing the way for Jesus. John came to prepare a community of repentance, of those who would be ready for the Messiah. This was to be a community not of those who went around moping about their sinfulness, but a community of those who had changed their ways, that is, their whole system of values and priorities. The Hebrew concept of repentance which John proclaimed was a matter of turning round and going in the opposite direction. To be ready for the Messiah meant – and still means – just such a radical change of attitude. John himself had prepared by going out into the desert, for the Messiah was to come striding across the desert, as did Israel at the Exodus from Egypt. John's clothing and his whole way of life showed his rejection of current materialism and his single-minded dedication. His is not primarily a negative point of view, for his quotation of Isaiah (reflected also in today's first reading from Baruch), shows that the flattening of the hills and the filling of the valleys is a preparation for the Kingdom of peace and justice. A good deal of positive planning and of spade-work is needed if we are to be ready to welcome that Kingdom.

What sort of change did John the Baptist ask from his listeners? Think of one change you need to make in your life to welcome Jesus.

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB

4 Respond & Request

Now slowly and prayerfully read the Gospel once again but this time in silence. Consider how this Gospel could apply to your life in general. Then thank God for any insight you may have received. Conclude by asking God to bless you with one of the following spiritual gifts to help you act on any resolution you have made: love, understanding, wisdom, faithfulness, peace, self control, patience, or joy. Please remember to pray for the Church and particularly our school families. **Then conclude by requesting the prayers of Our Lady & St Joseph.**



WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS †

Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of Sunday 9th December 2012



First Reading: *High Mountains Laid Flat*

Baruch 5:1-9

Jerusalem, take off your dress of sorrow and distress; put on the beauty of the glory of God for ever; wrap the cloak of the integrity of God around you; put the diadem of the glory of the Eternal on your head: since God means to show your splendour to every nation under heaven, since the name God gives you for ever will be, 'Peace through integrity, and honour through devotedness'. Arise, Jerusalem, stand on the heights and turn your eyes to the east: see your sons reassembled from west and east at the command of the Holy One, jubilant that God has remembered them. Though they left you on foot, with enemies for an escort, now God brings them back to you like royal princes carried back in glory. For God has decreed the flattening of each mountain, of the everlasting hills, the filling of the valleys to make the ground level so that Israel can walk in safety under the glory of God. And the forests and every fragrant tree will provide shade for Israel at the command of God; for God will guide Israel in joy by the light of his glory with his mercy and integrity for escort.

This part of the Book of Baruch is a meditation on Isaiah's promises for Jerusalem at the return of Israel from exile in Babylon. It is, of course, taken up by John the Baptist in his proclamation that the high mountains will be flattened and the valleys filled in to make a smooth road for the Messiah to cross the desert to Jerusalem. In the Hebrew tradition there were many aspects to the Messiah (the harbinger of God's kingship), expected by the people of Israel. For Isaiah the Messiah was a conquering hero, his garments stained with the blood of his victories. In this prophecy from Baruch the reign of God is more peaceful, a heartfelt dedication to God and the values of the divine sovereignty; for at this coming of God Jerusalem is renamed 'Peace through Integrity (or Justice)' and 'Honour through Devotedness'. True peace is possible only through the saving justice of God, when the People of God truly act as God's representatives, made in the image of God and the envoys of his saving values. The ideal of God's kingdom appears in the Garden of Eden before the Fall, when his representatives (Adam and Eve) lived in perfect harmony with one another and with God's whole creation.

In what sense has the coming of Christ brought peace to the world?

Second Reading: *Filled with the Fruits of Uprightness*

Philippians 1:3-6. 8-11

Every time I pray for all of you, I pray with joy, remembering how you have helped to spread the Good News from the day you first heard it right up to the present. I am quite certain that the One who began this good work in you will see that it is finished when the Day of Christ Jesus comes. God knows how much I miss you all, loving you as Christ Jesus loves you. My prayer is that your love for each other may increase more and more and never stop improving your knowledge and deepening your perception so that you can always recognise what is best. This will help you to become pure and blameless, and prepare you for the Day of Christ, when you will reach the perfect goodness which Jesus Christ produces in us for the glory and praise of God.

Paul always begins his letters with a commendation and a blessing. The Philippians to whom he is writing were Paul's favourite community; the letter is full of friendship and affection. Here he commends the Philippians for their partnership with him in the work of the Gospel, and prays that God's work in them may be completed so that they may be ready for the Day of the Lord, which Paul envisaged to be imminent. Today's passage is chosen by the Church as a preparation for the coming of the Lord Jesus at Christmas – and Christmas shopping leaves no doubt about the imminence of that Coming! This serves as a reminder that the traditional three comings of Christ cannot be separated: the coming in history was the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem; the coming in mystery is the coming of Christ into our hearts as we endeavour to mould ourselves as his faithful followers and to live out his values; the coming in majesty is the final coming of Christ in glory to gather his elect to himself, either at our homecoming in death or at the end of all things. The three comings lead on, one to another: the coming in history gives a new impetus to the Kingdom of God; the coming in majesty brings the Kingdom to its climax; the coming in mystery is our own repeated response to the Kingdom here and now.

What impact do these three comings of Christ have on our daily lives?

“ We endeavour to mould ourselves as his faithful followers and to live out his values. ”

The Wednesday Word: *Connecting Home, School & Parish through the Word of God*
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