

## Second Sunday of Advent C2024

After having focused on the first Sunday of Advent on the events of the first and the second coming of the Lord, we come now to the second Sunday. The coming of the Lord will be an event of great joy that will transform the fate of the whole world. As it was last week, today we have the witness of the prophet Baruch who was the disciple of prophet Jeremiah and who wrote around 6th Century before the birth of Jesus.

He certifies that the coming of the Lord will be a period of consolation and visitation from God. The time of mourning and suffering will be over for Jerusalem. There will be rejoicing and gladness, peace and justice over the whole earth when they will see the glory of Jerusalem. The city itself will rejoice when God will gather from East to the West all the scattered children of Israel. Jerusalem will receive a new name and become a land of worship for all the people.

Because God is coming, the people have to prepare for him a place in their hearts and in their lives. The prophet uses the symbolic language referring to nature by inviting them to lower the lofty mountain and to level the ground so that they may walk secure in the glory of God. He reminds them of the bounty and the mercy of God who has protected them with forests and every fragrant kind of tree.

The message of Prophet Baruch is also addressed to us. Advent is such a tremendous time of preparation for the coming of the Lord, a time of repentance, and a spiritual opportunity to give God more place in our lives. As we prepare ourselves week by week and year by year for the feast of Christmas, Advent comes to us as an invitation to update our relationship with the Lord, with ourselves and with our fellows.

Time can pass, epochs can change, but the message of the Gospel remains the same: prepare the way for the Lord. That is why the message of conversion and repentance John the Baptist addressed to his fellow countrymen resonates with the same intensity and urgency today as it was in the past. Who can resist such a call?

Our Lord Jesus Christ whose second coming we are waiting for is not a legend or a myth, but a historical person who lived in this world at an appointed time and under particular circumstances and a well-known government.

However, as human history goes on and distance takes place between the first Coming and his awaited second coming, we run the risk of becoming sleepy. Even our society is not in a mood of helping us keep the memory of our Lord alive until he comes again. For that reason it is good to listen again and again to the message of the Baptist and to react accordingly.

John's message is all about preparing the road for the Lord who is coming. May it be clear to each one of us that the road he is talking about is not a material road like our streets, avenues or highways! It is all about spiritual roads. Where are the spiritual roads situated? Of course, in our hearts. A heart can be like a parched path, or dirty street or a badly-lit boulevard and likewise. All these images aim to warn us about our state before the Lord. They invite us to conversion of heart in order to welcome the Lord.

Nobody can say that it is too late for him. Whatever might be our past, so heavy it can be, our Lord will never refuse to forgive us. The Lord rejoices when we approach him in humility and sincerity, seeking to normalize our relationship with him. What counts for him is not our past, as bad as it might have been, but our future. This future is so important that he gives a new chance for a new beginning. This is the time of conversion and repentance.

What we need, beloved, is that we encourage each other so that we may walk steadfastly toward the encounter with our Lord. As the fellow countrymen of John the Baptist heeded his voice and accepted the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin, we too have to leave sin behind us and reconcile with God, with ourselves and with one another. We all need help and encouragement to leave behind familiar ways which have become destructive. We need help in imagining ourselves differently, and imagining the good effect this will have on others. We have to take time to reflect what kind of person God wants us to be, what his plan is for us. We need faith in the future, our future, to see the power of God working in our change.

St. Paul in the second reading shows us that people begin to change when they are encouraged to see the best in themselves, not when they are asked to dwell with the worst in themselves. Do not be afraid about your past; but look forward, where the Lord is calling you. The Lord expects us, in this time of Advent, to increase our love and knowledge of him.

In this continual changing culture, may our love of our Lord increase every day so that we come to discern what is of value, what is pure and blameless that can keep us faithful until the day of his return for the praise of his glory and that of the Father.

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



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