

Homily for the Second Sunday of Advent, B, Dec. 6, 2020

On this Second Sunday of Advent we continue our preparations for the coming of Jesus at Christmas 2020.

Today, we hear from the prophet Isaiah words of great joy: *“Comfort comfort, my people says the Lord. A voice cries out in the desert: prepare the way of the Lord.”* What picture comes to mind when we hear the word “comfort”? The dictionary says the word means to soothe, cheer-up, or relieve pain. I picture a mother picking up a crying baby and soothing the child as she cradles it in her arms. Or perhaps a hug saying I’m here everything will be alright. Why does God tell Isaiah to cry out to his people these words of comfort? God, through Isaiah, was announcing that the people’s long exile in Babylon was over, their sins were forgiven and it was time to go home. I think this reading is chosen for us in this second Sunday of Advent to remind us that God is with us and the Lord Jesus is comforting us. How fitting this comfort is for us as we and the whole world go through this terrible time of careful living during the coronavirus.

Our Second reading is taken from the Second Letter of St. Peter. He tells us that a “day” with the Lord can be a 1,000 years. In other words if the end of the world seems so slow in coming, it is to give people time to mend their ways, to redirect their lives. But we never know when the Lord will call us home, so let us reflect on our lives and see where we can improve in living a holier life. He also warns us that our life can end suddenly so we should do our best when we can.

Our Gospel for today begins with an introduction of the Gospel of St. Mark. His opening words tell us: *“This is the Gospel or the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”* Interestingly, he does not begin his Gospel with the birth of Christ but begins 30 years later by telling us about John, the Baptist. What do we know about John,

the Baptist? Scholars tell us there had not been any prophets in Israel in almost 500 years. It had to be shocking for the people to hear about a prophet in the desert so crowds went out to see him and hear what he had to say. They saw an unusual man living in a desert, living an austere life with meager dress and a diet consisting of locust and wild honey. John is called the Precursor, the one who comes to prepare for the one who is to follow. He calls for a baptism of repentance. Advent reminds us that now is the time for us to repent of our sins and failings and get ready to meet the Lord once again on Christmas.

Our readings today also remind us that as we are on our journey of life we should be aware that God comforts us with his love every day and we are also taught how to live, namely we are to live spotless lives. Finally, our Gospel reading speaking of the appearance of John, the Baptist reminds us that we too were baptized and committed to following the Lord by loving God and our neighbors. Advent time is short, so let us use these few December days well as we once again prepare for Christmas, the Birth of Jesus.