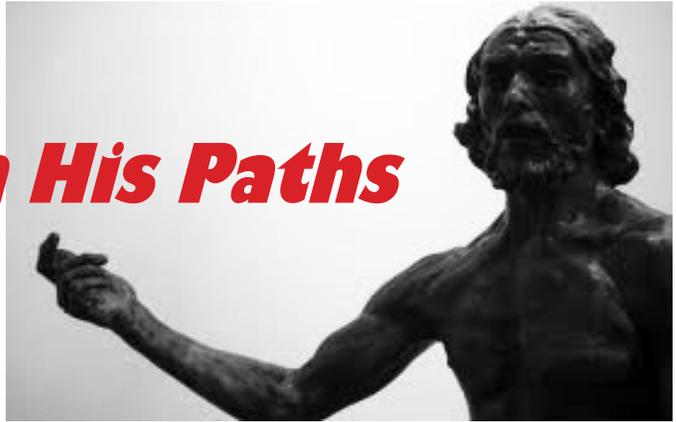


DECEMBER 10, 2017
2nd SUNDAY OF ADVENT (B)

Straighten His Paths

(A. Rodin's *John the Baptist*)



I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Is 40:1-5, 9-11)

¹Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God. ²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her service is at an end, her guilt is expiated; Indeed, she has received from the hand of the LORD double for all her sins. ³A voice cries out: In the desert **prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!** ⁴Every 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. ⁵**Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed**, and all mankind shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

⁹Go up onto 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!** ¹⁰**Here comes with power the LORD GOD**, who rules by his strong arm; Here is his reward with him, his recompense before him. ¹¹Like 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 FOCUS: Prepare the Way of the Lord

COMMENTARY

Short Background of the First Reading:

The Reading comes from the first part of the second book of Isaiah (Deutero-Isaiah).

Just for your information or reminder: The Book of Isaiah has three parts, namely:

Proto-Isaiah (chs. 1-39)

Deutero-Isaiah (chs. 40-55)

Trito-Isaiah (chs. 56-66)

Deutero-Isaiah is dubbed as Book of Consolation.

The Israelites have been in exile for many years. Nebuchadnezzar brought them to Babylon, destroying their institutions in Judah, the priesthood, kingship, etc., threatening their identity and religion (587 BCE). Now the prophet in exile taking the spirit and style of Isaiah of Jerusalem 200 years earlier, communicates the end of the exile, the restoration of their legitimate institutions (worship in the Temple, being ruled by a good king). The author sees the end of the exile as the beginning of God's rule over Israel / Judah. (539 BCE)

- V.1 invites people of Jerusalem to rejoice, to take heed of the comforting words of God. They should be comforted by the announcement: The sufferings of the people as a result of punishment for their sins is about to end. They have received more than enough. (v.2).
- Vv.3-4 express the coming of the Lord who will put an end their sufferings. Therefore, the

people must prepare, facilitate the coming of the Lord (*valley filled up, mountain made low...*).

- V.5 re-expresses the coming of the Lord (*glory shall be revealed*, only with his coming of course).
- Vv.9-10 repeat v. 2 (Zion // Jerusalem)
- V.11 describes what kind of God (Lord) is coming.

REFLECTIONS

In the First Reading, we should be comforted by the voice of the prophet declaring that the end of “punishment” / suffering is near. Restoration is close at hand.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 85:9-14)

**LORD, LET US SEE YOUR KINDNESS
AND GRANT US YOUR SALVATION.**

SECOND READING (2 Pet 3:8-14)

⁸ But 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. ⁹ 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**. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ Since everything is to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought (you) to be, **conducting yourselves in holiness and devotion**, ¹² 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. ¹³ But according to his promise we await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. ¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, since you await these things, be eager **to be found**

without spot or blemish before him, at peace.

THE FOCUS: Peter Talks About the Coming of the Lord

COMMENTARY

- V.8 God reckons time differently from us.
- V.9 The seemingly delay is a time for us to make up our minds (to change ourselves). God does not will to lose anyone.
- V.10 Day of the Lord is sudden and dissolves everything.
- Vv.11-12 Christians living in holiness and devotion will not be affected.
- Vv.13-14 They who await for his coming and have no sin will be in the “new heavens and new earth.”

REFLECTIONS

The Reading invites again the listeners to live without blame, in preparation for the day of the Lord. There is no other way to prepare for the “new heavens and the new earth” than to live without fault.

GOSPEL READING (Mk 1:1-8)

¹The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ (the Son of God). ²As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. ³A voice of one crying out in the desert: **‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.’**” ⁴John (the) Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a **baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins**. ⁵People 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. ⁶John was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. ⁷And this is what he proclaimed: “One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not

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worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the holy Spirit.”

THE FOCUS: Preparing the Way by proclaiming the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins

COMMENTARY

- V.1 announces what is to be read: a gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The gospel of Mark is the first literary type of its kind, to be followed by other gospel writers.
- V.2-3 picks up the message of the first reading and Malachi 3:1.
- V.4 Mark interprets the voice in the desert as John the Baptist. Mark interprets the “prepare the way” as baptism of repentance.
- V.5 describes the overwhelming response of the people in the barrios of Judaea and inhabitants of Jerusalem: were being baptized as they acknowledged their sins.
- V.6 describes the simple attire and diet of John.
- Vv.7-8 express John’s humility (not worthy) and the greatness of the one coming yet.

Further observations

- The very first line is very important in the interpretation of the whole gospel of Mark. *“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”*
- This introduction announces that the gospel is a story of an extraordinary person. He is not just an ordinary person of Nazareth, but identified as Christ (Messiah) and Son of God with a special mission. All the readers and listeners of the gospel must therefore take the story seriously.

REFLECTIONS

The reading suggests that without repentance we cannot follow the teachings of Jesus.

What is repentance? To await for the coming of Jesus to teach us. We have been taught by

other people and by the world, absorbing their values. With the coming of Jesus, we need to stand prepared by the new teachings of the new teacher, the Christ, and to absorb his values.

II. TYING THE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR SHARING/HOMILY

We must prepare for the “way of the Lord” (First Reading). The Lord who comes is totally different from the worldly lords. He will restore his people, free them from sufferings and evil rule.

Prepare the “way of the Lord.” (Gospel Reading), through repentance (change of teachers).

When the Lord comes, we must be prepared (=be found blameless in his sight) (Second Reading).

Suggestions for the homily/sharing:

We should focus on the word “preparation” as we are in the season of Advent.

To understand the word “preparation” better, we should be able to answer the following questions:

What are we preparing for?

Who is this person / Lord who deserves our preparation?

What kind of preparation should we make according to the readings?

We must inculcate that preparations for the coming of the Lord is equivalent to repentance from sinful living.

What is to repent? To give up self-rule (living independently from God, living according to the values of this world) and to be ruled by Jesus adoption of Jesus as our teacher, no other else, to lead us to salvation.

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