

# Steadily Preparing for His Coming

## I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

### FIRST READING (Bar 5:1-9)

*Jerusalem addressed as person* (imperatives)

<sup>1</sup>Jerusalem, **take off your robe of mourning and misery**;/ put on forever the splendor of glory from God:<sup>a</sup> / <sup>2</sup>Wrapped in the mantle of justice from God,/ place on your head the diadem/ of the glory of the Eternal One<sup>b</sup>/

*Reasons for rejoicing* (splendor, named peace of justice)

<sup>3</sup>For God will show your splendor to all under the heavens;/ <sup>4</sup>you will be named by God forever:/ the peace of justice, the glory of God's worship./

*Jerusalem, again, addressed as person* (given imperatives as in v.1)

<sup>5</sup>Rise up, Jerusalem! **stand upon the heights**;/ **look to the east** and

*Reasons for rejoicing* (children coming back, high mountains leveled)

see your children/ gathered from east to west/ at the word of the Holy One./ **rejoicing** that they are remembered by God./ <sup>6</sup>Led away on foot by their enemies they left you:/ but God will bring them back to you/ carried high in glory as on royal thrones.<sup>d</sup> / <sup>7</sup>For God has commanded/ that every lofty mountain/ and the age-old hills be made low,/ That the valleys be filled to make level ground,/ that Israel may advance securely in the glory of God.<sup>e</sup> / <sup>8</sup>The forests and every kind of fragrant tree/ have overshadowed Israel at God's command;<sup>f</sup> / <sup>9</sup>For God is leading Israel **in joy**/ by the light of his glory,/ with the mercy and justice that are his.

THE FOCUS: **Rejoice**



### COMMENTARY

- Baruch is believed to be a secretary of Jeremiah (based on Jer 36-45).
- However the book is known only in Greek. (No Greek yet in Palestine or Babylon during the time of Jeremiah.) The Jews in Alexandria liked it very much. But it has poor knowledge of the times and events, written later (like Esther, Judith or Daniel) to encourage a persecuted people.
- Well the message of the text has a bearing on the Advent Season.
- It captures well how should Christians feel about the coming of the Lord who brings salvation.
- There should be change of status: from sadness and misery to rejoicing; standing up; refusing to be sad.
- For the Lord, through Jesus Christ, will show you your splendor. He will bring back your children.
- The coming of the Lord brings about change, not just a return to the former place, paving a flat highway to facilitate return, but also dignity and glory.

## 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT (C) December 9, 2018

### REFLECTIONS

Advent is a season of joyful preparation and anticipation of the Lord's actions towards his people. God will restore his people to their original dignity and honor and glory.

To rejoice is God's imperative.

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM** (Ps 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6)  
**THE LORD HAS DONE GREAT THINGS FOR US; WE ARE FILLED WITH JOY.**

**SECOND READING** (Phil. 1:4-6, 8-11)

#### *Prayer of Paul*

<sup>4</sup>(I am) praying always with joy in my every prayer for all of you, <sup>5</sup>because of your partnership for the gospel from the first day until now. <sup>6d</sup>I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until **the day of Christ Jesus.** <sup>7</sup>It is right that I should think this way about all of you, because I hold you in my heart, you who are all partners with me in grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. <sup>8e</sup>For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. <sup>9</sup>And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, <sup>10g</sup>to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless **for the day of Christ**, <sup>11h</sup>filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

**THE FOCUS: The Day of Christ**

### COMMENTARY

- The text comes from the captive Paul.
- Vv.4-6 express the prayer of Paul for his friends in Philippi. He wants them to continue their mission work. They have been mission partners since the beginning. Paul prays with joy.
- V.8 invokes God as witness to his feelings for them. (He's not bluffing.)
- V.9 speaks of the content of his prayer: that your love may increase in knowledge (discernment).
- In V.10 he says you may discern what is

valuable (not for what is trivial). Purpose: to be faultless for the day of the Lord, but filled with righteousness from Christ (v.11).

### REFLECTIONS

He challenges the Philippians to stay as missionary partners as in the beginning until the end. Mission work is non-stop.

The Philippians must also be discerning, must have a good judgment. Love must be coupled with correct judgment (prudence).

**GOSPEL READING** (Lk 3:1-6)

#### *Political Background*

<sup>1\* a</sup> In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene,\*

#### *Religious Background*

<sup>2b</sup> during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas,\* the word of God came to **John** the son of Zechariah in the desert.

#### *The mission of John*

<sup>3\* c</sup> **He** went throughout [the] whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins,

#### *Isaiah's Prophecy*

<sup>4\* d</sup> as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah:<sup>e</sup> "A voice of **one** crying out in the desert:/ 'Prepare the way of the Lord./ make straight his paths./ <sup>5</sup>Every valley shall be filled/ and every mountain and hill shall be made low./ The winding roads shall be made straight./ and the rough ways made smooth./ <sup>6g</sup>and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

**THE FOCUS: John**

### COMMENTARY

- St. Luke begins his story with the political and religious background. He exhibits awareness of the socio-political and religious environment during his times.
- He situates the mission of John against the political and religious leaders (vv.1-2) with their names mentioned.
- The mission of John consists in preaching

- baptism of repentance.
- Why repentance? For the forgiveness of sins (v.3).
- His area of apostolate is along the Jordan River (not in the cities but in the desert).
- V.4 interprets the preaching of John as fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy (v.4).
- The prophecy is very similar to the First Reading, *though chronologically speaking, Isaiah came first before Baruch.*
- The main point of the prophecy is to facilitate the coming of the Lord.
- The Lord is none other than Jesus who brings salvation to all (v.6).
- Salvation is universal.

## REFLECTIONS

John the Baptist is the “forerunner” of Jesus. He prepares the people to welcome Jesus when he comes. It is just a matter of time now. John is six months older than Jesus. He does it by baptizing (immersion) people who listen to his words.

Baptism is a sign of repentance, making Jesus’ path straight.

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

The First Readings calls each Christian to be joyful, to keep heads up high. There should be no place for sadness, for the Lord is coming. The Second Reading calls each Christian practitioner to increase their love, to continue one’s mission and to be discerning, intelligent (not tactless). The Gospel Reading calls each person to repent, to turn to God.

### *How to develop your homily*

Begin by telling a story about Manny Pacquiao preparing for a fight or any good athlete. Exercise, practice, discipline, training, good food, good rest, good attitude, fighting spirit, sacrifices are done.

In this season of Advent, we must make

necessary preparations to encounter Jesus on Christmas.

The Readings give us hints how to do it: The First Reading enjoins us to keep up the good spirit, shrug off sadness and negative energy and look forward to victory. The Second Reading challenges us to increase love, make our love more encompassing, embrace more people into our inner circle, not contented with the same circle (*the same barkada, same people to associate with*), going beyond our comfort zone. We must go to missions. The Gospel calls us to go deeper into our spiritual life, by turning away from sin and turning to God, through Jesus. We facilitate the coming of the Lord. We don’t make his journey toward us difficult. We do not evade him. We do not make a lot of excuses “I am not yet ready. I am busy. Maybe next time.” We don’t postpone our conversion. We listen to the voice of the prophet as he speaks right now.

What happens if there is no change in us in this season of Advent?

There won’t be any change also in the days to come. Christmas will be trivialized, seen only in terms of social function and business opportunity.

In our parishes, if we, leaders and members, do not change our value system and faith system (signs of repentance), our celebrations only become part of the yearly routine. Christmas never becomes a source of inner joy and thanksgiving. Christmas will just make us poorer.

This season of Advent should lead us to go deeper into ourselves and see what keeps us away from God, why we can’t pray or enjoy praying, why our relationships are not getting better, why we don’t feel the presence of God in our midst.

-Prepared by Fr. Cielo Almazan, OFM

## III. OUR CONTEXT

1. Are you preparing gifts that are distinctly Filipino?
2. Who are the people you want to visit this Christmas? (HM).