

Second Sunday of Advent

December 6, 2020

Year B RCL

Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; Mark 1:1-8

“Prepare the way of the Lord.”

By: The Rev. Fr. Fabian Villalobos

The Second Sunday on Advent has for protagonist the Prophets, they are men and women that serve as messengers of God sharing to the people of their own time the love of God, and the need of repentance and change. The prophets are witness and forerunners of how God is present and works among people. Often the prophets associated their words with actions that symbolize something deeper and normally unconventional.

Among the prophets, the greatest recognized is John the Baptist whose lifestyle and powerful preaching is so important that the gospels mention him as the “voice who cries out in the wilderness”. John’s life appears in contrast with the routine that people have in those days. He was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

John's message was the proclamation of a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. His message is important today for us as it was when he was preparing the way for Jesus. The invitation to change and practice penitence is always actual and needed. In this sense we hear the testimony of the gospel. "people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him and were baptized by him in the river Jordan." The people understood that allowing Jesus to enter their lives and preparing for him includes necessarily an act of personal regretting and stopping any wrongdoing.

John's baptizing them was as a sign of being reconciled and aware of the grace of forgiveness. Those who went to the River Jordan understood the need to repent their sins and be renewed. Knowing that Jesus was without sin, John tries to dismiss his request to be baptized, but is obedient to Jesus' will. Thus, this is one of the reasons for John's reluctance.

The invitation and call to repentance is part of the growth in the spiritual life of the believer of all times. Without the baptism of repentance, the baptism with the Holy Spirit has no human participation. We can say that baptism with water without accepting the lordship and salvation of Jesus is only a ritual. John's prophecy and obedience to Jesus shows him to be the Messiah and Lord. This

recognition more than Christological titles are expressions of the divine identity of Jesus.

The four canonical gospels- Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John manifest and reveal Jesus' life and actions each one from a different perspective. The evangelists are also like the prophets, they are messengers of good news, or like the Prophet Isaias says today in the first lesson, they are "heralds of good tidings." The good news is that Jesus, God with us, the Messiah, and Son of God is nearby. The beginning of Mark's gospel which will be our gospel companion during this new liturgical year declares in the first sentence of his gospel the uniqueness of Jesus persona as "good news".

In this time of Advent, in the midst of illness and pandemic, the prophetic message of Isaiah, John, and Mark about the comfort that Zion needs, the feeding of the flock in which the shepherd gathers the lambs in his arms, and the "good news" are all powerful expressions of the tenderness and love of God. These images reassure our waiting expectations and increase our faith in declaring that even if "the grass withers and the flower fades; the word of our God will stand for ever." Grounded in this eternal truth, we continue the Advent Journey trusting in the God who comes with might. Amen.