

HOMILY for 2nd SUNDAY of ADVENT – Year C

Last Sunday I talked with you about the Promise the Lord made to the Israelites by sending them the Messiah/Savior to rescue them from a life of slavery & help restore their country to the time under the reign of King David. The Lord did fulfill that Promise by sending Jesus who called them to change their spiritual life & return to God. Unfortunately, Jesus was not the political leader that they had expected. Instead, He was the suffering servant who called on the Israelites for a spiritual conversion & even offered His own life on the Cross to highlight His message of conversion & salvation. For He wanted them to embrace a new lifestyle & promising future that He had prepared for them. In fact, this Sunday's First Reading shares with us part of the Lord's vision for the Israelites as the following: "Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning & misery; put on the splendor of glory from God forever... Up, Jerusalem! Stand upon the heights; look to the east & see your children gathered from the east & west at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing that they are remembered by God. Led away on foot by their enemies they left you, but God will bring them back to you borne aloft in glory as royal thrones... For God is leading Israel in joy by the light of His glory, with His mercy & justice for company."

Evidently Jerusalem & all the Israelites had been in mourning & misery because their families had been divided & driven into slavery. Everyone had been miserable & suffered tremendously at the hands of their invaders & occupiers. They had nothing to live for & no hope for a bright future. They were like dead men walking in the prison of life. Thankfully, the Lord heard their cries & now would like to turn around their misfortunes. He did not forget about them. Because of His mercy & justice, He would love to bring them all home from the east & the west. This would be the home-coming reunion that the Israelites had dreamt about for years. They were full of joy & tears as they headed toward Jerusalem under the guidance & protection of the Lord. He had helped them turn the page & begin a new chapter of their lives.

This home-coming reunion is an event of a lifetime. The Israelites would need to prepare for that special time & the divine revelation. This Sunday's Gospel shares with us Prophet Isaiah's message for the people of God as the following: "...A herald's voice in the desert crying, 'Make ready the way of the Lord, clear Him a straight path. Every valley shall be filled & every mountain & hill shall be leveled. The windings shall be made straight & the rough way smooth, & all mankind shall see the salvation of God.'" So, the prophet would like the Israelites to prepare the way of the Lord & tidy up their surroundings for the Lord's coming. For that is how they would welcome the Lord & be ready to see all of His blessings.

We sure have welcomed many special guests to our homes before. Those guests could be our families & friends or some dignitaries. We are excited & honored to see our special guests & spend some quality time with them. That is why we would do everything possible to make them feel special & welcomed on their arrival. We would clean up our entire homes & rearrange our furniture to make everything look nice for their visits. For we want that meeting to be perfect & memorable. If we all do that for our special guests & their visits, what should we do for our Lord's Second Coming in this Advent season? We should clean up & decorate our spiritual homes with intense prayers & good deeds. We must straighten out our relationship with the Lord & make sure that we are in good terms with God. If we did anything that might hurt that relationship, Advent is the time for us to change it & have a close relationship with

God. If our spiritual life has been lukewarm, we need to get it fired up this Advent Season by attending Mass regularly, praying more often, & doing more good deeds for others. That is how we can prepare spiritually for the Second Coming of our Lord this Advent.

My dear brothers & sisters, Jesus is the special guest who will be coming to visit us this Christmas. We are called to prepare our hearts & homes to welcome Him. We should try to make some changes in our spiritual life & use this season of Advent to ask for a Savior. For that hero will bring us guidance, protection, & hope in this uncertain & confusing world. We need that leader more now than ever. I pray that you will meet your Savior & prepare well for His coming in this season of joy & hope.