

Homily-2nd Sunday of Advent C

As we celebrate our second week of Advent, our readings show us that several kinds of Advent have already occurred in history: in Prophet Baruch's time, it was the Advent of God to save the Israelites in captivity or Exile. In John the Baptist's time, it was the first coming of Jesus into the world to save us from the dominion of the devil. So these Advents are very reassuring. Our own Advent Season relives these events and looks ahead to Christ's Final Coming to save the world. Nevertheless, God insists that there is no "blanket" salvation. We must individually play our own part because, as St Augustine advised, "The God who made you without you will not save you without you".

Prophet Baruch, in our First Reading ([Bar 5:1-9](#)), anticipates the deliverance of the Israelites in Exile: They have been suffering deprivations and oppression. The situation seemed hopeless. Yet Baruch, foreseeing God's intervention, declared that their oppression will end. Such optimism has no place for people without faith. The famous pessimist philosopher, Author Schopenhauer, once declared: "Optimism is not only absurd, but a really wicked way of thinking; a bitter mockery of the unspeakable suffering of humanity". He cannot be more wrong! We are a people of hope because "with God all things are possible". Baruch believed and proclaimed God's word of salvation with incredible faith and hope.

What is faith? Scripture says "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb 11:1, RSV). This is what we see in Prophet Baruch. Even within the prevailing tense situation of the Exile, he declared:

Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and misery; put on the splendor of glory from God forever: For God will show all the earth your splendor: you will be named by God forever... Up, Jerusalem! Stand upon the heights; look to the east and see your children gathered from the east and the west at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing that they are remembered by God.

We see it also when the Israelites, fleeing from Egypt, were caught between the Egyptian forces and the Red Sea; and Moses declared to the frightened Israelites: "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again" (Exod 14:13). Just imagine what this means: the people are suffering and you proclaim that their suffering will end? How can you be so sure? My dear friends, this stems from a deep personal and spiritual relation-

ship with God in prayer. This is faith in action. One may wonder, supposing I say it and it doesn't happen? However, like Moses, Baruch made the declaration, standing on God's word and it actually came to pass. The Psalmist, in our Responsorial Psalm, confirmed this, saying, "When the LORD brought back the captives of Zion, we were like men dreaming. Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with rejoicing". Thus, during Advent, the Church declares to us that our slavery to the Devil and evil will end; Christ comes with victory to free us. And so shall it be!

But while anticipating this deliverance, Baruch encouraged the people to return to God and repent of their sins, big or small: "For God has commanded that every lofty mountain be made low... and gorges be filled to level ground, that Israel may advance secure in the glory of God". John the Baptist echoes these words (in our Gospel - [Lk 3:1-6](#)): "*Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. 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 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.*"

The prophets are saying that all flesh needs to give up its own 'human glory', 'human salvation' in order to see the salvation and glory of God. When we take this "one decisive preparation step" towards God, God will make the remaining "nine steps" to save us and grant us his glory. In the Advent during John the Baptist's time, God literally became man (divine condescension) – coming down to our level, in order that "all flesh will see his glory". What a radical thing never known before! Our present Advent relives this and anticipates more. In this final Advent, God will do "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1Cor 2:9). This time, we'll not only see his glory; we will receive it. Jesus who shared in our humanity will make us share in his divinity in abundance (cf. John 10:10). Truly, "When he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1John 3:2).

Finally, when John the Baptist called for repentance, the people responded; how much more then must we respond especially through frequent use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. So, let the mountain of human pride be laid low. Let the tendency to say "I can do whatever I want" be laid low. Let our vainglory, wickedness and hypocrisy be laid low. Also, let every valley of human superficiality and indifference to God's love be filled in. Let the lack of prayer life and lack of confidence in God be filled in; so that, at the manifestation, we "may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph 3:19). Amen!