

## Second Sunday of Advent - Lectionary: 6

### Reading I - [Bar 5:1-9](#)

Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and misery; put on the splendor of glory from God forever: wrapped in the cloak of justice from God, bear on your head the mitre that displays the glory of the eternal name. For God will show all the earth your splendor: you will be named by God forever the peace of justice, the glory of God's worship.

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. Led away on foot by their enemies they left you: but God will bring them back to you borne aloft in glory as on royal thrones. For God has commanded that every lofty mountain be made low, and that the age-old depths and gorges be filled to level ground, that Israel may advance secure in the glory of God. The forests and every fragrant kind of tree have overshadowed Israel at God's command; for God is leading Israel in joy by the light of his glory, with his mercy and justice for company.

**Responsorial Psalm - [Ps 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6](#).** R. (3) **The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.**

### Reading II - [Phil 1:4-6, 8-11](#)

Brothers and sisters: I pray always with joy in my every prayer for all of you, because of your partnership for the gospel from the first day until now. 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. God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

### Gospel - [Lk 3:1-6](#)

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, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert. John went throughout the whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah:

*A voice of one crying out in the desert:*

*“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.”*

## Second Sunday of Advent: Peace & Hope

This past week “we have been experiencing the liturgical season of Advent: a time of openness to God's future, a time of preparation for Christmas, when he, the Lord... came to dwell in the midst of this fallen humanity to renew it from within. In the Advent liturgy there resounds a message full of hope, which invites us to lift our gaze to the ultimate horizon, but at the same time to recognize the signs of God-with-us in the present. The Lord wants to speak to the heart of his people and, through them, to the whole of humanity, to proclaim salvation.” Pope Benedict XVI, *Angelus*, 7 December 2008 These words of Pope Benedict XVI capture the whole of the undercurrent of Advent.

In the midst of our holiday preparations, the Advent season calls us to pause. In particular, this second Sunday of advent we are invited to reflect on the true meaning of peace, “the peace of God that surpasses all understanding [and] will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” <sup>Phil 4:7</sup> “For a child is born to us, a son is given to us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him...Father-Forever, Prince of Peace. His dominion is vast and forever peaceful...” <sup>Isaiah 9:5-6</sup>

This peace that surpasses understanding is fortified in us by our faithful response to the call of the Baptist, to ‘prepare a way for the Lord’. During this Advent season of preparation, we need to refocus our attention on *metanoia* and forgiveness. This advent portion of our pilgrimage could be seen as a time to ‘regroup’, to consider the obstacles that have arisen, that we have allowed to remain and impede our way, to lose our focus and weaken our resolve. This is a time to be renewed, to re-affirm our commitment to God and to the Christian community with whom we go to God and through whom our God comes to us. We need to open ourselves to further conversion, to an ever deeper change of heart, to a deeper listening to what Jesus is asking of us.

The Letter to the Hebrews says that Christians here on earth do not have a permanent homeland but seek one which lies in the future. <sup>Heb 11:13-16; Phil 3:20</sup> The biblical theme of exile speaks to us of this, of the destination of our pilgrimage, that until we reach our true homeland we live in this world as exiles. But this doesn't mean that we live only for the future: though we look to the fullness of our salvation, we must be fully present to our common pilgrimage in which every step taken anticipates our destination.<sup>1</sup>

Echoing the First Reading from the prophet Baruch and quoting the words of the prophet Isaiah, St. Luke told us what must be done. We must make straight the way of the Lord to the depths of our souls. We must fill up what is lacking in us and make low the mountains and hills that stand between us and him. That which has become crooked and rough in us as consequence of sin, we must seek to smooth and straiten in reconciliation. This is also how we too are to open ourselves for that saving power to restore and reinvigorate us. To clarify our path once again and strengthen our determination.

Physical exile in the Old Testament functions for us as symbolic of our spiritual exile, the result of all the ways we wonder from God. Insofar as we, to some degree, remain in him and he in us, we will feel the pain of being in a state of spiritual exile from the kingdom of God and seek our remedy. Like the Israelites in exile, we too will cry out to God. Like the prophesies of promise and hope of Baruch and Isaiah for the Israelites, the Church gives us this annual season of Advent to remind us that God has not forgotten us, that our sins and sufferings do not have to forever alienate us from God. God is present with us, gently calling us to turn again or more fully to Jesus Christ, who leads all home to God. He is the source of our hope because his incarnation is the undeniable guarantee that God, the only one capable of saving us

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict XVI, [Spe Salvi](#) (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2007).

from our sins, actually wants to save us from our sins. God did not, has not, and will not ever abandon us to our exile. God hasn't given up on us. Rejoice because we are remembered by God! Rejoice in hope.

In John 16:33 Christ says to his apostles and to us here today, "*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace...*" This peace is not contingent on external circumstances but is anchored in the unchanging character of God.