

## Second Sunday of Advent – December 9, 2018

### Our Lady of Perpetual Help

#### **First Reading: 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.**

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.

**R. The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.**

Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad indeed.

**R. The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.**

Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the torrents in the southern desert. Those who sow in tears shall reap rejoicing.

**R. The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.**

Although they go forth weeping, carrying the seed to be sown, They shall come back rejoicing, carrying their sheaves.

**R. The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.**

#### **Second Reading: 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 – December 9, 2018

### Our Lady of Perpetual Help

#### **INVITATION TO PRAY**

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God...

#### **Proclaim the Scriptures out loud**

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

#### **INVITATION TO REFLECT**

“Pre-evangelism” is a modern ministry term that refers to the biblical process of preparing people to receive the Good News of Jesus and the salvation available through him. In one sense it is very much like the agricultural process of preparing the soil to receive seed so that the seed has the optimal chance of germinating and springing into life. The farmer prepares the soil by plowing, tilling, and adding various soil supplements, depending on the condition of the soil. This process takes time, energy and money, however without proper soil preparation much seed would be wasted and the harvest greatly diminished.

John the Baptist was a herald of Jesus’ arrival on the scene and history of man’s salvation. John’s austere life and straightforward proclamations prepared the way for the appearance of Jesus and the starting of his ministry. John was involved in “pre-evangelism” long before the term was coined, for he conditioned hearts to be receptive to the arrival of the Lamb of God, and Jesus’ work of salvation. Consequently, when Jesus presented himself to John to be baptized, several of John’s disciples were prepared to follow Jesus, ultimately becoming his disciples. Because of John’s preparatory work the seed of Jesus’ words fell on the receptive soil of their hearts, bringing forth both growth and fruit.

We know that Christ has come, that’s what we celebrate during this season of Advent. However, there dwells in our midst many people for whom Jesus’ coming does not exist. Though they may know his name and even use it when cursing, they don’t know who he is, they do not comprehend what he has done for them, and they have never encountered him personally. Many are bruised and battered by life, cynically rejecting the Truth, and steeling themselves against further hurt, they remain unreceptive to the seeds of Truth.

Like the people of John the Baptist’s day people today also need a herald to awaken their hearts to the Good News. As Pope Paul VI points out “Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness. Take a Christian or a handful of Christians who, in the midst of their own community, show their capacity for understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good. Let us suppose that, in addition, they radiate in an altogether simple and unaffected way their faith in values that go beyond current values, and their hope in something that is not seen and that one would not dare to imagine. Through this wordless witness these Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live.”<sup>1</sup> Like the farmers soil, people need someone who cares enough to gently break up the fallow ground of their hearts by their living witness, so that it can receive the seeds of Truth.

The season of Advent is a prime time to begin this process with people we know. Advent lends itself to being friendly and expanding relationships. Casual conversations about Christmas plans, feelings, and traditions can easily overflow into a gracious and non-threatening sharing with others the real meaning of Christmas for us. Little kindnesses and thoughtful, unexpected acts of grace-filled giving can soften and melt hearts steeled by life’s hurts, communicating love, care and concern. We not only can be, but must be, heralds of Jesus especially during this season of Advent. Who knows? Perhaps God will use us in this season to herald his coming to a friend or family member who will hear him, for the first time.

<sup>1</sup> Evangelii Nuntiandi, paragraph 21

**Second Sunday of Advent – December 9, 2018**  
**Our Lady of Perpetual Help**

**INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

**First Reading — Baruch 5:1-9**

1. This passage speaks of the joyful return of captive Israelites to Jerusalem and to the community of those who gather around the word of the Holy One. How would you describe to someone who is living in spiritual captivity, the transformation available to them in Christ?

**Second Reading — Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11**

2. What part do you think our prayers play in another's spiritual growth?

**Gospel Reading — Luke 3:1-6**

3. What do you think John the Baptist was doing in the wilderness? Does his experience have any application for us?
4. Isaiah prophesied of John the Baptist's crying out in the wilderness. What do you think is the wilderness of our society?
5. How would you restate John's message of preparation, and promises, so that people today would understand and respond?

**INVITATION TO ACT**

*Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.*

**CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with a final prayer.*