

## **LECTIO DIVINA OF SECOND ADVENT SUNDAY B**

**Opening Prayer:** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Lord Jesus, we thank You with profound gratitude for uniting Yourself with our fallen humanity. When You first entered into this world, you remained hidden for nine months in the immaculate womb of Your Blessed Mother. She carried You, body and blood, soul and divinity, within the sanctuary of her body. Precious Lord, as we embrace this Advent Season, please open our eyes to see the great value and blessing of Your Incarnation. Help us to discover Your hidden presence in this world and within our own soul at this time of pandemic. We choose You, this Advent, as our King and God. Draw us close to You and free us from our sin so that we may love You with a pure and holy heart. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

**First Reading:** A reading from the book of Prophet Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and proclaim to her that her service is at an end, her guilt is expiated; indeed, she has received from the hand of the Lord double for all her sins. A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the Lord! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God! Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low; the rugged land shall be made a plain, the rough country, a broad valley. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken. Go up on to a high mountain, Zion, herald of glad tidings; cry out at the top of your voice, Jerusalem, herald of good news! Fear not to cry out and say to the cities of Judah: Here is your God! Here comes with power the Lord God, who rules by his strong arm; here is his reward with him, his recompense before him. Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs, carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care. **(The Word of the Lord/Thanks be to God)**

**Commentary:** Isaiah consoles the Jews who were exiles in Babylon and gives them Yahweh's assurance that their 60 years of Babylonian captivity will end soon and that they will be going home as free people. He assures them that they will be brought back to Israel by the power of God. Isaiah is not shy about saying that the Exile was a punishment for sin. But Israel's sins are forgiven now, and the exile is over. Isaiah wants the people to consider their return journey as their second Exodus, with Yahweh once more their loving Father and faithful Shepherd.

**Responsorial Psalm 85:** *R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.*

I will hear what God proclaims; the Lord—for he proclaims peace to his people.  
Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear him, glory dwelling in our land.

*R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.*

Kindness and truth shall meet; justice and peace shall kiss. Truth shall spring out of the earth,  
and justice shall look down from heaven.

***R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.***

The Lord himself will give his benefits; our land shall yield its increase.  
Justice shall walk before him and prepare the way of his steps.

***R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.***

### **Second Reading: A reading the second letter of St. Peter 3:8-14**

Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day. The Lord does not delay his promise, as some regard “delay,” but he is patient with you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a mighty roar and the elements will be dissolved by fire, and the earth and everything done on it will be found out. Since everything is to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be, conducting yourselves in holiness and devotion, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved in flames and the elements melted by fire. But according to his promise we await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you await these things, be eager to be found without spot or blemish before him, at peace. **(The word of the Lord/Thanks be to God)**

**Commentary:** St. Peter warns against false teachers who have given up any expectation of Christ’s return because of its long delay. As the years rolled by, non-Christians began ridiculing those Christians who still expected Christ’s second coming. A few Christians, in fact, began to believe that it would never happen. They laughed at what they thought was error and delusion. So, Peter reminds them that even though the Second Coming seems to be delayed, Christ will indeed come as promised. Peter also reminds them that God doesn’t reckon time the way we do since, to Him “one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years are as a day” (Psalm 90).

### **Gospel Reading: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Mark 1:1-8**

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. A voice of one crying out in the desert: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.” John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. John was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. And this is what he proclaimed: “One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” **(The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ/Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ)**

**Meditation:** The second and third Advent Sunday always center on John the Baptist. What is remarkable about John the Baptist? All the four gospels speak about John the Baptist. Like the birth of Jesus was foretold by the prophets of the OT, John's role as the messenger of Jesus was already foretold in the OT prophets Isaiah 40:2 *"I am sending my messenger ahead of you"* Malachi 4:5-6 *"See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction"* What was foretold by the prophets fulfilled when the angel said to Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist, Lk 1:12-16 *"Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall name him John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He will drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb and he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of fathers toward children and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to prepare a people fit for the Lord.* Jesus says in Luke 7:28 *"I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John"*. In our catholic liturgical calendar, we celebrate birthdays only for three persons: Lord Jesus (Dec 25), Blessed Virgin Mary (Sept 8) and John the Baptist (June 24). Because of John's unique role in the history of salvation, the church joyfully celebrates his birthday since the fourth century.

**John was a Messenger:** John, as we heard in the gospel today was a prophet in the wilderness. He was entrusted with two important assignments. First, he must be a messenger; second, he must prepare the people to accept Jesus as the Messiah. John, in the minds and hearts of his people, was God sent. They accepted him as the authentic voice of God. He pulled the people of his time towards the Messiah and he had a great impact on his people through his witnessing lifestyle.

1. His first witness is the choice of the location for his preaching. He decided to preach in the wilderness. He gave up the comforts of the city, he decided against the lifestyle of the city dwellers and he made a definite choice to find God in the desert. The desert as we understand is a lonely and desolate place. John wanted to spend quiet moments to find God and to listen to the voice of God. The desert provided him a wonderful opportunity to have a profound God experience.

2. His second witness is the choice of dress. He was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. His dress reminded his people of the ancient prophets who consciously decided to give up the comfort and luxuries of life. John had a simple lifestyle.

3. His third witness is the choice of food. John ate locust and wild honey. His diet was simple. He ate the food which the poorest of the poor would eat. John's desert dwelling, his simple and humble lifestyle and his effective preaching appealed to the hearts of his people. Although he had many admirers and followers, he was not carried away by his growing

popularity. On the other hand his dream was to prepare his people to accept the Messiah and his entire focus was on Jesus.

**John was a Message:** John proclaimed the baptism of repentance. His baptism was not a proselyte baptism (converting gentiles into Jews. Instead), it was a baptism for the forgiveness of sins by repentance, inviting people to purity. Quoting the prophet Isaiah, John the Baptist declared, “Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough ways made smooth” (Lk 3:5). As the prophet was calling the people of Israel to prepare for the Lord’s visitation, John the Baptist was preparing the people for receiving the messiah. John wasn’t there by chance but by a right and definite choice because God had called John to be the messenger who went ahead of Jesus. His insistence was a preparation of heart and life. “The king is coming. Mend your lives and not your roads”. All those who came to the Jordon confessed their sins, they were baptized and they experienced God’s forgiveness. Therefore, the Jordon experience was a healing experience for the people.

**How to apply the message of today’s liturgy in our life?** 1. Like John, our personal life must be a witness by the marks of simplicity, humility and poverty in spirit. We should get rid of the cultures of consumerism, gluttony and extravagant lifestyle.

2. Like Isaiah the prophet and St. Peter, we are called to comfort the spiritually wandering people to get back to God by praying for them and counseling them and comforting them.

3. Prophet Isaiah’s words should constantly be kept in our mind and heart. “***Every Valley shall be filled***” we must fill the valley of our life with divine and human values. “Every mountain and hill shall be made low”. If we have been building mountains and hills of grudges, resentment, hatred and anger, it is a time to clear our debris. “The crooked shall be made straight and the rough ways made smooth”.

As we prepare ourselves for this great event of celebrating the birth of Jesus, how does the Word of God challenge us? How can we as a community accept Jesus as the Messiah and proclaim the Messiah to the world? How to prepare ourselves and others who are in our care for the joyful nativity of Jesus?

**Concluding prayer:** Gracious God, you fill us with joyful expectation of our Divine Savior. You raised up John the baptizer as a herald who calls us to conversion. As we joyfully await the glorious coming of Christ, we entrust ourselves to you. Through the darkness, we look for your wisdom. At this concerned time of pandemic, we come to you in humility. Help us to be awake and aware of the radiance you bring to our life. Help us to be grateful each day for the blessings of family and friends. Like Prophet Isaiah, let us bring hope to people. Like St. Peter, let us warn those who live in error. Like St. John the Baptist, let us be messengers and message as well to one another. (Hail Mary/ Blessing)