



SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Year A
December 8, 2013

Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17
Romans 15:4-9
Matthew 3:1-12

Gathering

*(An Advent wreath and a bible opened to this week's gospel rest on a table covered with purple cloth. Two standing card., one reading, **Justice**, the other reading, **Peace**, also rest on the table. A length of chain or rope connects them to one another.)*

On this second Sunday of Advent we hear John the Baptist cry out in the desert. He calls us to prepare the way of the Lord, to promote the justice and peace that is the hallmark of the kingdom of God. Last week we were challenged to deepen our expectation of the coming Lord and his reign. How did you live in expectation of the Lord's coming this past week?

Prayer

(Two candles on the Advent wreath are lit. The leader invites the members to settle into the moment and become conscious of God's presence with them. A selection of instrumental music is played. After some quiet time the community prays as follows.)

Leader: O God, with your judgment endow the king,

and with your justice, the king's son;
He shall govern your people with justice
and your afflicted ones with judgment.

All: Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for
ever.

Leader: Justice shall flower in his days,
and profound peace, till the moon be no more.
May he rule from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

All: Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for
ever.

Leader: For he shall rescue the poor when he cries out,
and the afflicted when he has no one to help him.
He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor;
the lives of the poor he shall save.

All: Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for
ever.

Leader: May his name be blessed forever;
as long as the sun his name shall remain.
In him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed;
all the nations shall proclaim his happiness.

All: Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for
ever.

Amen.

Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17

HEARING THE LORD'S GOSPEL

(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the proclamation of the gospel, the leader invites members to name a word or phrase from the gospel that stays with them, but without any additional comment. Some may repeat what another has

already said.

When this naming is complete, the leader passes out copies of the scriptures of the week as needed. Pausing between them, the leader then poses these two questions: “What draws you to this gospel?” “Where do you resist this gospel?” The community pauses for a time of silent reflection. After about a minute, the leader invites members to consider the Reflection and Questions for the week. After a time for silent reflection, the leader invites members to re-arrange themselves in groups of three or four for sharing. The small groups move off so as not to intrude on one another.)

Reflection

Pope Paul VI is famously quoted as saying, “If you want peace work for justice.” Working for justice includes the difficult work of standing in solidarity with the poor, working to correct unjust systems, and maintaining the dignity of every life. This is part and parcel of *preparing the way of the Lord, making straight his path.*

The vision of peace and harmony poetically described by the prophet Isaiah is one that we are always striving for. It becomes a possibility only if we work to live in right relationships, governed by justice and love. In today’s gospel, John the Baptist cries out in the desert. He calls us to reform our lives. Our love for our Lord and for one another cannot just be an external exercise. It must actually produce good fruit. We are to live in right relationships; in doing so, we give peace a chance.

At Thanksgiving and in the season of Advent we witness the generosity of so many of our parishioners. The charity that goes out from our parishes in the way of food and gifts for our local poor is tremendous. But, we might wonder, what about the rest of the year? How are the poor faring then? What are we doing to get at the root of poverty? Would there be more peace in our cities and towns if our work for justice was equally intense throughout the year?

Social action involves walking on *two feet*, one foot is *charity* and the other is *justice*. Both feet are necessary. Our works of charity, direct service, need to be followed by the more difficult work of advocacy for systemic justice.

In this beautiful season of Advent we are reminded that preparing the way of the Lord is an ongoing process where the *good fruit* of peace is possible

only when justice is practiced. When the Lord comes, says Isaiah, “Justice shall be the band around his waist.” Let us prepare the way of the Lord.

Questions For Reflection And Conversation

- ◆ If your parish asked you to replace your gifts of charity with your gift of time in service to those in need this Advent, what would you do?
- ◆ Where do you see signs of the reign of God breaking out in the world around you?
- ◆ What might you need to do to prepare the way of the Lord and make straight his path to your heart this Advent?
- ◆ When have you experienced acting justly bringing peace to some situation?

HEARING THE GOSPEL’S LORD

(After about fifteen minutes of sharing in threes/fours, the leader re-gathers the community. Once back together, members pause for a moment. The leader then poses these questions: “What do you want to hold on to for yourself from this session?” “How are you/we being called to live in response to God’s word?” After a pause, the leader invites the community to a time of conversation. When this sharing is complete, the community moves to a time of prayer.)

Response in Action Suggestions

- ◆ Read *Tattoos on the Heart* by Fr. Greg Boyle, S.J. This is a challenging, thought-provoking, and hopeful story about Boyle’s work with gang members in Los Angeles. For more information see: www.homeboy-industries.org
- ◆ Learn about the advocacy work of Catholic Charities. Join the Campaign to Reduce Poverty in America, a multi-year, multifaceted approach to alleviating poverty in the United States.
(www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/what-we-do/advocacy.)

Prayer

(After a brief pause, the gospel or a portion of it, either of the other readings as appropriate or the responsorial psalm are proclaimed. The idea is to select a text that lends itself to inviting members to the time of silent prayer)

that follows. Following the proclamation, the leader poses these questions to the members: “What does Christ in his Spirit say to you now?” “What do you say to him in response?” The community pauses for a full five minutes of prayerful attention to God. A brief instrumental selection may be played during part of this time. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two, or a brief expression that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally. The community receives this without additional comment. When the sharing is complete, several members lead the community in prayer as follows.)

- I: Lord Jesus Christ,
Make us instruments of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let us sow love.
Where there is injury, let us offer pardon.
Where there is discord, let us offer peace.
- II: O divine Lord, you taught us that those who work for
peace
are called the children of God.
Help us to persist in establishing justice and truth
as firm and lasting foundations of peace.
- III: Lord, you offer us peace as a gift
and peace as a responsibility that we must realize with
your help.
Give us the grace to reach out for peace,
to have attitudes of peace,
that our words may be words of peace,
and our works be works for peace.
- All: Then may we build the peace that we and our nations
need.

Monseñor Pedro Rubiano Sáenz, Cardinal of
Colombia and Archbishop of Bogotá Prayer
Without Borders, Celebrating Global Wisdom
2005. Catholic Relief Services.

(The session concludes with singing, “God of the Hungry.” The song may be found on the Internet. When the song is complete, members exchange a sign of peace.)