

Second Sunday of Advent

We are in the second week of our preparation for the coming of Christ at Christmas.

To help us prepare for the coming of Christ, the Church in today's first reading recalls the prophecies of the great prophet Isaiah about the fulfillment of the promises God had made to Abraham.

Isaiah told the people of Israel that God would fulfill the promises he had made to Abraham. God would one day send them a Ruler who would rule and judge with justice because he would have the true spirit of the Lord.

That is, the expected Ruler from the root of Jesse would possess the marvelous gift of God in his nature. Perfect peace would reign in his kingdom, not only between human beings but between animals also. Let us listen to a portion of the reading again:

“Justice shall be the band around his hips. Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them.”

Isaiah used this poetic language to tell the people that with the true spirit of God that the ruler would bring they and the other creatures would enter a new era of relationships; cordial relationships.

The spirit of the Lord is the divine force which is given to the individuals to enable them to fulfill missions otherwise beyond them.

In today's gospel we read about the prophetic vocation of John the Baptist. It began in the desert where the people of Israel had experienced the power of their God. There, devoid of all human support they had learnt to trust God.

Matthew described how John the Baptist dressed and what he ate to stress the fact that the Baptist was really like a stranger in his own country; he was a Jew but his behavior set him apart from the people of his time.

When John the Baptist began his public ministry along the banks of the Jordan River, his powerful message to the people who went to him could be summarized in that one word: **Repentance.**

John wanted them to enter a new age of relationships. He wanted them to be faithful in their relationships with God and their fellow human beings. He wanted them to resolve all conflicts that had dominated them so that they could live in peace with one another and welcome one another.

In short, John wanted them to give God his right place in their daily lives.

How do we stand in relation to God and our neighbors? Are our conducts truly Christian?

Let us heed to John's call to repentance today as we prepare to celebrate Christmas. Let us remember that professing repentance is not enough as John told the Pharisees and the Sadducees who went to him for baptism. We need to bear fruit that befits repentance. We have to do something concrete to ensure that the past does not repeat itself. Let us open a new and positive chapter of our relationships with God, the Church and our neighbors. In a word, our lives should set us apart.

While this is often difficult, John the Baptist offered us a new hope in the one who would come after him. He announced that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit given to us at our baptism and confirmation enables us to do things otherwise beyond us. So as we prepare to receive Christ at Christmas let pray for the renewal of the Spirit of God in us so that we may totally redirect our lives to God and live in harmony with one another.