

First Reading: Baruch 5:1-9
Response: “**What marvels the Lord worked for us! Indeed we were glad**” (Ps. 125:3)
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 125
Second Reading: Philippians 1:3-6. 8-11
Gospel: Luke 3:1-6.

The Risen Lord, is ‘God-with-us’ (*Emmanuel*) He comes to save all humanity and calls us to join in the work of salvation, to walk with him in the new messianic age that conquers sin and celebrate new life.

Now is the time to “**take off your dress of sorrow and distress**” (Bar.5:1). Discard pain and sin and put on the armour of faith. “**Put on the beauty of the glory of God**” (Bar.5.2) and **wrap the cloak of integrity around you**” (Bar.5:2) and proclaim the coming of the Lord.

Like the fallen city, Jerusalem, with its pain and suffering, you have a destiny for glory and “**a name that will be for ever**” (Bar.5:4), written in the book of life.

Sing a joyful song of hope like the people on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. They recall an exile sown in tears but God brings them back, “**they come back, full of song, carrying their sheaves**” (Ps. 125:6). They experienced grief but God’s great harvest of joy is coming.

Jerusalem is also a spiritual home-coming, hand of God guiding his people. They are lifted up in the Spirit as they sing: “**What marvels the Lord worked for us! Indeed we were glad**” (Ps. 125:3).

St. Paul, in prison, joyfully writes that God “**will finish the good work he began in you**” (Phil. 1:6).

Paul’s deepest wish is that his friends be ready for the coming of the Lord, his second coming (*parousia*), “**be pure and blameless, and prepare for the Day of Christ when you will reach perfect goodness**” (Phil.1:10), namely, full union with Christ.

Become aware of the hand of God in your life. Tune in to the voice in the wilderness, the Baptist challenging us to “**prepare a way of the Lord**” (Lk.3:4). Jesus, whose name is salvation, has come. “**Make his paths straight**” to your heart (*Ibid.*).

The prophet prepares us by calling for *metanoia* (a change of heart) and “**baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins**” (Lk.3:3). This leads us on to the fulfillment of Jesus’ (Saviour’s) mission (salvation) and “**all mankind shall see the salvation of God**” (Lk.3:6).

Reflect upon what the ‘voice in the wilderness’ is saying in the Gospel (Lk.3:1-6).

Avail yourself of the grace of forgiveness in the Liturgy, viz. Eucharist and Sacrament of Penance.

Teaching: Advent is a season for ‘preparing a way for the Lord’ (Lk.3:3). Remove the obstacles between yourself and Christ. Make a straight path, level the hills and fill the valleys. Tune in to the voice in the wilderness. Listen to the word of God. Advent is a joyous time of preparation and for repentance, a spiritual cleansing.

Witness: Prepare yourself for the Lord. Examine your heart and confess your sins. Encourage others to do so as well.

FOR THE CHILDREN

Share with the children the **Gospel** message of the Baptist (Lk.3:4-6).

Discuss the opportunities of confession in the **Liturgy**, especially Eucharist and Penance.

Doctrine: Teach the children about the moments of confession and their meanings.

Encourage a desire and love of sacraments by personal example and **Witness**.

FOR TEENAGERS (*Christian Praxis*)

Name the Present Action: *What does penance and repentance mean to you?*

Your Story and Vision: Share your experiences of such moments and your intentions.

Church's Story and Vision: Discuss Church's experiences of reformation and repentance.

Yours and Church's Vision: *How would you relate yourself with the Church in repentance, building a better future and the Kingdom of God?*

RCIA

"Only God forgives sins" (Mk.2:7). Since he is the Son of God, Jesus says of himself, **"The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins,"** and exercises this divine power: **"Your sins are forgiven"** (Lk.7:48). Further, by virtue of this divine authority he gives this power to men to exercise in his name: **"Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven"** (Jn.20:21-23). (*The Catechism of the Catholic Church, # 1485*)

LIFE EXPERIENCE

Rodney, Joe and I are three priests who meet, retreat and confess our sins to one another. Together we experience a sense of sinfulness, the power of each other's prayers and the grace of forgiveness through the sacraments. We hear Christ talking and raising us up through one another. Life would not be the same without the sacraments, neither would our priesthood and the experience of God and His people. Even ancient wisdom recognized the importance of examining ourselves and "listening to the voice that speaks within." (i)

(i) **I CHING.** Translated by **Stephen Karcher.** Vega, London. 2002. p.34.

I CHING is an ancient wisdom used in China over 3,000 years ago, reflecting upon events and interpreting them as oracles, or as we would say, reading the signs of the times.

LITTLE ANGELINA

Angelina thought it strange that her mother should be spelling **Christmas** in its abbreviated form, **Xmas**. Why spell Christ with an **X**, she wondered. She needed to know that it was the first letter of **ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ**, *Christos*, 'Anointed One' in Greek. She remembered seeing it with the second letter of the name, on priest's vestments, **XP** (*chi ro*). She also saw **IΗΣ**, an abbreviated form of **ΙΗΣΟΥΣ** (*Iesous*) meaning Jesus, our *Saviour*. Abbreviations can make sense sometimes for Angelina, even her mother calls her *Ange*, which by the way is an 'angel' in French.

IMPORTANT WORD: **"Advent"**

In Philippians, St. Paul says that **"God will finish the good work he began in you."** We are preparing for the **"day of Christ when you will reach perfect goodness."** That day is called the *parousia*, 'coming,' referring to the 'Second Coming' of the Lord. What will he find when he comes? Are you ready? Are you, like the Baptist, a witness to Advent, a sign to the world that the Lord is coming. Advent is not simply a seasonal coming of the Lord but a reminder of our destiny for eternity. St. Benedict reminds us that in order for God to finish the good work begun in us, we must cooperate" by serving him with our God-given talents." (i)

(i) **RULE OF ST. BENEDICT.** '*Prologue*'. Translated by **A.C. Meisel & M.L. del Mastro.** Image Books, Doubleday, NY. 1943. p.43.

Watchword: “**And all mankind shall see the salvation of God, Jesu’ah (Jesus)**” (Lk.3:6)

Hebrew: וִירְאוּ כָל־בָּשָׂר אֶת יֵשׁוּעַת אֱלֹהִים

Vera’u kol basar ‘eth Jesu’ah(t) ‘Elohim.

Greek: Καὶ ὁψεται πασα σαρκς το σωτηριον του Θεου.

Kai opsetai pasa sarks to soterion tou Theou.

Latin: **Et videbunt omnes caro salutare Dei.**

Portuguese: **E toda a carne vera salvacao de Deus.**

Spanish: **Y vera toda carne la salvacion de Dios.**

French: **Et tout le monde verra le salut accorde par Dieu.**

German: **Und alle Menschen warden den Heiland Gottes sehen.**

Afrikaans: **En al die mense sal die verlossing sien wat van God kom.**

Zulu: **Isintu sonke siyakubona usindiso lukaNkulunkulu.**

Xhosa: **Bonke abantu baya kulubona usindiso oluvela kuThixo.**

Sotho: **Mme batho bohle ba tla bona ho pholosa ha Modimo.**