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2nd Sunday of Advent - 5 December 2021

Gerard Moore

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5 December 2021

Second Sunday of Advent

Reflection by Gerard Moore

Introduction

Our readings bring themes of salvation, hope and the coming of the Christ. This continues to prepare us for the feast of the nativity as a feast of the transformation of the world.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you gave us a new heart through the shedding of your blood.

Lord have mercy.

You gave your life that we might have hope through the darkness.

Christ have mercy.

You bring us to the New Jerusalem.

Lord have mercy.

Collect

*Almighty and merciful God,
may no earthly undertaking hinder those
who set out in haste to meet your Son,
but may our learning of heavenly wisdom
gain us admittance to his company.*

The backdrop of this oration is the second coming of the Christ. The sense of 'haste' conveys willingness and desire rather than being caught short and unprepared. Indeed, the prayer is all about our preparation. The oration sets in play earthly undertakings, heavenly wisdoms and admittance to Christ's company. This is not a dull contrast between earth and heaven. Rather, heavenly wisdom is the wisdom of Christ. The term conjures up the sapiential books of the Old Testament, which have much sagacious, practical and earthy advice. In New Testament terms, to be erudite in heavenly wisdom is to know the beatitudes. And to be learned in the ways of Christ is to be steeped in the knowledge that whatever we do for the least we are doing to Christ. When we clothe the poor and feed the hungry, we are in the company of Christ. The 'mundane' and 'earthly' are the things that hold us back from this encounter with Christ on earth.

And so, the prayer unfolds. In the Christian wisdom of care for the poor and the recognition of Christ in all, we are already in his company and experience his mercy. This learning fuels our desire, our haste, to be in his company fully and knowing the power of divine mercy.

First Reading

Baruch 5:1-9

As God returns Jerusalem from exile, the mercy of God will turn mourning and misery into the peace of justice.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 125(126)

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

The psalmist speaks joyfully of the return from exile, as does Baruch.

Second Reading

Philippians 1:4-6,8-11

God who has begun such ambitious good work in us will also bring it to fulfillment.

Gospel Reading

Luke 3:1-6

While the coming of Jesus is set within the political and religious reality of his time, we are introduced to him through John the Baptist's call for repentance.

Reflection

The Advent meaning of the first reading is that God will save. There will be restoration and the end of exile. It is a powerful hope that the prophet Baruch keeps alive for the dismayed and disheartened people living under conquest outside of the promised land. The poet is preaching hope.

The text from Philippians is also preaching hope, with an emphasis on the Second Coming of Christ. This is one of the themes of the Advent season, as it 'plays' across the celebration of the incarnation and the fulfillment of all things in the return of Christ.

The Gospel returns us firmly to preparation for the feast of the incarnation, introducing us to the Baptist. Soon enough John will facilitate the advent of the adult Jesus at his baptism and commencing his ministry. The reading begins with setting our protagonists within history. Jesus and John carry out their ministry amongst real historical figures and amidst events real to their own lives. Luke's scope begins broad, and introduces Tiberius, the Emperor of Rome. The focus narrows to Pilate

whom we know plays a pivotal role in Jesus' death, and lesser figures such as Herod. He also we meet later, and significantly rules Galilee, the homeland of Jesus and a place rife with rebellion. Nothing much good comes from there, and particularly under Herod's rule. The list concludes with the pair of High Priests, again both of whom we know from later in the narrative. The evangelist gathers the Emperor, regional leaders and the religious leaders into an opening historical set piece. Historical accuracy is not quite Luke's intention, rather John emerges and soon Jesus, to minister in a world led by invasive forces attached to a ruthless empire which has co-opted the religious leadership. Australian scholar Brendan Byrne sees this passage as an example of a 'hospitality' to the realities of culture and an 'at-homeness' in the world that is part of the wider sense of the 'hospitality of God'. By situating Jesus firmly within his time, his historical reality and his religious context, Luke is exploring the meaning of the incarnation. From him, what does it mean for the light to come into the world if it does not mean shedding light on the world as it is, a world that God unreservedly loves.

The Gospel, then, is used in the feast to highlight the *adventus* of Christ. For Luke, Jesus takes up the prior message of the prophet John, whose baptism of repentance sought to bring conversion to his followers and have them live under the forgiveness of God. Luke needs to highlight John and set his message at the service of Jesus. John preaches the poetry of Isaiah as a reminder that his work is only the beginning, and that there is greater hope on the way. Within our passage there is a contrast between the current rulers from amongst the invaders as well as the religious leaders, Rome and Temple as one, and the one who is coming from the desert, from the wilderness, from 'no place' and 'no power'. Yet no obstacle can withstand his leading all humanity straight to God!

If we take up Brendan Byrne's observation about the hospitality of God embracing the real state of the world, from its politics to its environment, our path to Advent in these pandemic times is different from other years. How can we be more like John, bringers of light that leads to Christ? In a sense, this year it is the world that is waiting, and it is we who are the bringers. Across all that has been happening, have we as a community been able to make paths straight and mountains flat so that all may reach the safety and security needed. It is a time to acknowledge how our teachers, nurses, carers, parents and police, amongst others, have filled in valleys, polished rough roads and exemplified the hospitality of God in culture and history. This remains an unusual Advent, and one in which the church as the bringer of the Good News has a role to celebrate and continue.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

As people of God, we pray that the Lord will be with us as we prepare for Christ's coming this Christmas and at the end of time.

Petitions

We pray for the Church and all who live the resurrection, particularly Pope Francis and members of the Plenary Council. As we all work the road to the Synod of Bishops, may their leadership and example encourage us in our seeking the way of the Lord.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray in thanksgiving for the gift of John the Baptist calling your people to you, knowing himself to be the bridegroom's friend and the one whom Jesus commended.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of all nations that decisions they make in governance will be for the common good of their people, particularly for those who have suffered due to the pandemic.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for people suffering in any way. Help us to show your love toward them so that we may help bind their wounds.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for your community gathered here, that we will inwardly digest the Word that we have received today. Make us gentle and kind, to be as Christ to all we meet and to reach out to those in our community who have been impoverished by COVID-19.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who have died commending them into your loving hands. Be with those who mourn and give them your peace which passes all understanding.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

Father, as we make our way to Bethlehem, hear that prayer that we offer in our weakness. We keep our hearts fixed on you knowing that you will answer our prayer and that the world might believe the wonderful freedom you offer in Jesus. We know that our needs will be granted through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA

Advent litany. B. Farrell. 279
Advent song. D. Browne/ J. Wood. 281
My soul in stillness waits. M. Haugen. 280
O come, O come Emmanuel. J. M. Neale et. al./ Gregorian Chant Melody. 285
Prepare the way. B. Boniwell. 284
Wait for the Lord. Taize. 283

AOV1

O come, O come Emmanuel. J. M. Neale et. al./ Gregorian Chant Melody. 174

AOV2

Open the heavens. B. Boniwell. 163

AOV4Kids

Christmas is coming. J. Bell. 55 (Verse 2)
Fill ev'ry valley up. M. Mangan. 54
O Emmanuel. M. Mangan. 52

CWB

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry. Charles Coffin, tr. John Chandler. 780
Prepare the way. Brian Boniwell. 794
Take comfort, God's people. Omer Westendorf. 813

CWBII

Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions
Hark! a herald voice is calling. Tr. Edward Caswall. 239
Open the heavens, Lord. Brian Boniwell. 243
Prepare the way. Brian Boniwell. 250

Additional selections by Chris deSilva

Comfort, comfort now my people. Johann G. Olearius, tr. Catherine Winkworth. 238
On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry. Charles Coffin, tr. John Chandler. 244
Wait for the Lord. Taizé Community. 251
Like a shepherd. Bob Dufford SJ. 538

S&S2

Ready the way. Curtis Stephan. 293
We shall prepare. Janet Vogt. 294

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 125: *The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.*
Psalm 125: Noel Ancell. CWB 177
Psalm 126: The Lord has done great things for us: Noel Ancell. GA 74
Psalm 126 (125): Jenny O'Brien. JOBC pg. 9
The Lord has done great things for us. LPC Tony Alonso p.8

Music selections by Michael Mangan

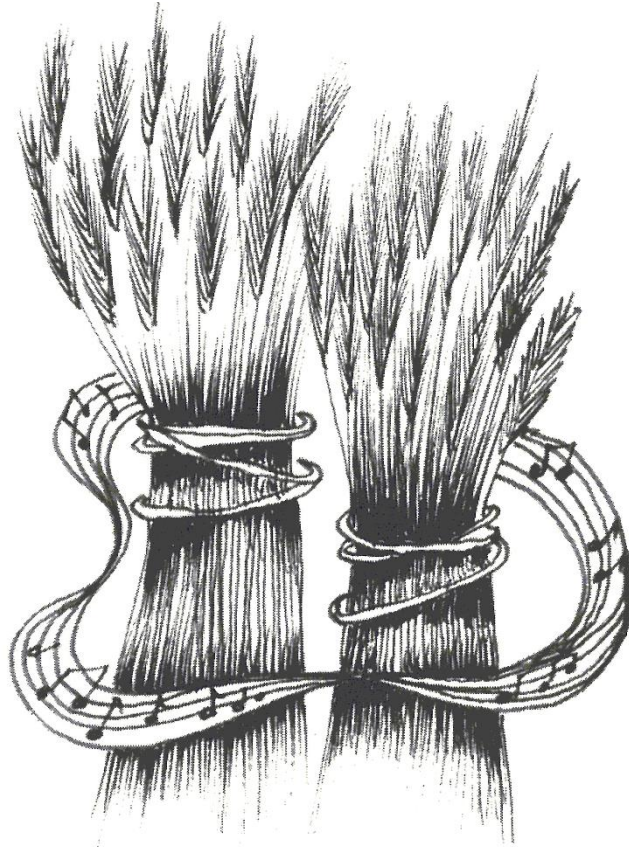
Fill every valley (TT/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]

O Emmanuel (TT/SYJ/CWB II) [Gathering, Communion, Recessional]

Come, Lord Jesus, come *CH & V2* (SYJ/ CWBII) [Lighting Advent Wreath]

We come, we come (TWB) [Communion – esp V3]

Waiting for the child (TT/SYJ) [Non-Scriptural Reflection - Gifts]



**They came
back
full of song.**