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Second Sunday of Advent - 8 December 2024

Gerard Moore

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8 December 2024

Second Sunday of Advent

Reflection by Gerard Moore

Introduction

Our readings this week continue the broader perspective of Advent, with the promise of a return from exile and the introduction of Jesus by the Baptist. The coming of Christ is set within the political framework of the times, beginning with Tiberius Caesar in Rome and centring in on the desert of Jordan. The intention here is that the justice that is ushered in by Jesus is for all.

Penitential Act

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

Lord Jesus, you are the Messiah. Lord have mercy.

You call us to prepare the way for you in the world. Christ have mercy.

You are our salvation. 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.

Collect commentary by Gerard Moore: The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by me for the Canadian liturgical journal Celebrate! (Novalis Press). My thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

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 to us the Baptist. Soon enough John will facilitate the advent of the adult Jesus at his baptism and commencing his ministry. The passage 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. For the evangelist, the coming of Jesus will have an effect on the entire 'world'.

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 loves unreservedly.

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's observation about the hospitality of God embracing the real state of the world, from its politics to its environment, our path to Advent must give pause to the wider scope of our current world. This is sharpened by the emphasis in the first reading, where Baruch preaches the restoration of the people of Israel to the promised land.

We can take up the metaphor in Baruch somewhat against the grain. As a people awaiting the coming of the light, we see disinformation and mistrust leveling mountains of truth. We see the complexity of our world and the state of our environment 'made straight' for prejudice and disunity to travel into our communities. As Catholics we have to resist these [impulses, and impulses and](#) exemplify the Baptist and the Lord as bringers of justice to the poor, the marginalised and the exploited.

It is in face of this that Pope Francis calls for dialogue. He invites us to a Gospel response. The Vatican Congregation for Education (2022) offers three approaches to conflict:

- 1) When conflict arises, some people simply look at it and go on their way as if nothing happened; they wash their hands of it and get on with their lives.
- 2) Others embrace it in such a way that they become its prisoners; they lose their bearings and project onto institutions their own confusion and dissatisfaction and this make unity impossible.
- 3) But there is a third way, and it is the best way to deal with conflict. It is the willingness to face conflict head on, to resolve it and to make it a link in a chain of a new process.

Our Gospel is a reminder of the compelling nature of the first option but teaches that the followers of Jesus take up the more complex third way. We would prefer a more peaceful run up to Christmas!



Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

Today our scripture readings are full of joy because of the faith of God's people. So let us, in faith, offer all of our needs to God.

Petitions

We pray for Pope Francis and the leaders of the Church as they find new ways to walk together in hope. May they unlock their hearts and be willing to face conflict in a positive and hopeful way.

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

We pray for world leaders as they seek to find a way through conflict and the destruction of truth. May they hold onto the hope of peaceful outcomes and the restoration of homes and communities.

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

We pray for all those who seek to draw the world into a better understanding of our created world and how we must protect what God has given. May they find support in this community.

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

We pray for prophets in our time. Give them the strength to continue announcing the coming of the light even though disinformation and mistrust has levelled mountains of truth.

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

We pray for ourselves in this busy and tumultuous time as we prepare for Christmas. May we not lose our focus on the truth and the light that comes through the Incarnation.

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

We pray for all those who have died and are suffering from grief, illness, domestic violence and fear. May they find peace and strength.

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

Conclusion

God of all graces, fill us with joy and trustfulness as we offer these needs to you in the sure hope that they will be fulfilled in Jesus' name and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Second Sunday of Advent, Year C (8 December 2024)

Title	AOV	AOV2	AOVK	CWB	CWBII	GA
Advent litany					253	279
Advent song						281
Christmas is coming			55			
Comfort, comfort now my people					238	
Fill ev'ry valley up			54			
Hark! a herald voice is calling.					239	
Like a shepherd	160				538	467
My soul in stillness waits						280
O come, O come Emmanuel	174			763	242	285
O Emmanuel			52			
On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry				780	244	
Open the heavens		163			243	
Prepare the way				794	250	284
Take comfort, God's people				813		
Wait for the Lord					251	283

Title	AOVNG	S&S1	S&S2
Ready the way			293
We shall prepare			294

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 125: *The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.*

	CWB	GA	JOBC	LPC
Psalm 125	177	74	pg. 9	pg. 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]