

2nd Sunday of Advent



As in the previous Sunday's readings, the message is a message of hope.

In the 1st reading, the time frame is the same. The Jews are suffering the effects of the Babylonian exile. Baruch, not to be confused with the financier Bernard, was a secretary to the prophet Jeremiah. Women and children were abandoned within devastated Jerusalem. The temple was in ruins. The people were dispirited. Baruch exhorts the people, "take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction, put on . . . the beauty of the glory of God . . . that marks you as sacred to Yahweh." The people rejoice at the return of the children from exile. God is faithful to His holy Word. The prophet promised that Yahweh would reward their faithfulness with vindication. Baruch speaks of miraculous rains in the desert that will produce "woods and every fragrant tree" which will shade Israel. John the Baptist words echo those of Baruch in making a straight path for the Lord. Scripture is not describing a geographical upheaval. But that the Word of God would bring about a radical change in the hearts of men.

In the Gospel, John didn't expect to see this perfection. His ministry was a preparation to receive the good news of Jesus. John introduced the period of fulfillment that would begin with the life of Jesus. Luke sited the ministry of Jesus within the context of world history. Pontius Pilate allowed Jesus' crucifixion. Herod Antipas condemned both John and Jesus. Annas and Caiphas rejected John's baptism and Jesus' teaching. By placing John at the Jordan, Luke pointed to a new age. The Jews crossed the Jordan to take possession of the Promised Land.

In the 2nd reading, immersion in the Jordan would symbolize the baptism of repentance. Through their baptisms, God's grace becomes operative in the community of believers in Philippi. God had begun the good work in you, said Paul, and God would "bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ." Baptism is a personal conversion experience of turning away from sin and toward God's ways. It occurs not in isolation but in community where the acts of one affect the lives of all.