

2nd Sunday of Advent

Homily: Fr. Shijo George

Pastor – Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Victoria, BC, Canada

On this Second Sunday of Advent, the Church celebrates the week of ‘Peace.’ The Second Candle that was just lit is also named the *Bethlehem Candle*, representing the qualities of peace and preparation: reflecting and recalling Mary and Joseph’s journey to Bethlehem and the peace that Christ’s birth brings to the world. This is reflected in the Readings today, that encourage us to cherish the peace that is within us and to prepare our lives to travel with the Lord into His everlasting Peace.

In the First Reading, the book of Baruch recounts the Lord’s assurance of consolation and peace for the Hebrew people in exile and to the deserted Jerusalem. The Hebrews, who acknowledge and were lamenting of their sins, long for joy and peace, and to one day return to Jerusalem. The Word of God in this account calls for liberation and peace: “... take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction, O Jerusalem, and put on forever the beauty of the glory from God.” The Prophet addresses Jerusalem and bids her to contemplate with joy the return of her children. God is Peace, and He will lead His people to His Glory. Liberation and salvation come from God. The promise of a new life is coming; a life with God, and of lost joy, peace, and glory being regained.

In the Second Reading from the Letter to Philippians, St. Paul urges them to determine what to do and what is best to follow a righteous way of life; living a life armed with good works, love, peace, and joy so that on the ‘day of Christ’ they remain pure and blameless.

In the Gospel passage, St. Luke portrays John the Baptist as the inaugurator of the Gospel’s new time of grace and herald of the Messianic Kingdom. John’s mission is an invitation to join the *Movement of Renewal* through repentance and forgiveness. That, to experience the Peace of Christ, one must be ready to prepare and realigned one’s life accordingly.

The root of the word *Repentance* is from the Greek word *Metanoia* that means “to change one's mindset” in order to bring about a life-change. In Hebrew, the word *TESHUVAH* is



the word that is used for ‘repentance’. This word depicts a firm decision that is made to rearrange one's way of thinking and feeling: a firm decision to forsake what is detrimental to one's spiritual well-being and to turn back to God. It stands for a radical change and shift in one's physical, emotional, and spiritual life. This is read in the book of Joel; “Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart...” (Joel 2:12). Repentance is not just to feel sorry for the transgressions we have enacted, but it is rather a call to enact a complete about-turn back to God: to a New Way of Life. If this *Metanoia*, or *TESHUVAH* happens for us and in us, God takes over the control of our lives.

As we journey through this Advent season, let us ask Jesus, our Lord, to help us experience real repentance, and to re-arrange our lives for the Messiah and His Peace.