



Second Sunday of Advent

Lectionary: 6

**Reading I**

**Bar 5:1-9**

Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and misery;  
put on the splendor of glory from God forever:  
wrapped in the cloak of justice from God,  
bear on your head the mitre  
that displays the glory of the eternal name.  
For God will show all the earth your splendor:  
you will be named by God forever  
the peace of justice, the glory of God's worship.

Up, Jerusalem! stand upon the heights;  
look to the east and see your children  
gathered from the east and the west  
at the word of the Holy One,  
rejoicing that they are remembered by God.  
Led away on foot by their enemies they left you:  
but God will bring them back to you  
borne aloft in glory as on royal thrones.  
For God has commanded  
that every lofty mountain be made low,  
and that the age-old depths and gorges  
be filled to level ground,  
that Israel may advance secure in the glory of God.



The forests and every fragrant kind of tree  
have overshadowed Israel at God's command;  
for God is leading Israel in joy  
by the light of his glory,  
with his mercy and justice for company.

### Responsorial Psalm

Ps 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6.

**R. (3) The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.**

When the LORD brought back the captives of Zion,  
we were like men dreaming.

Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with rejoicing.

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

Then they said among the nations,  
"The LORD has done great things for them."

The LORD has done great things for us;  
we are glad indeed.

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

Restore our fortunes, O LORD,  
like the torrents in the southern desert.

Those who sow in tears  
shall reap rejoicing.

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

Although they go forth weeping,  
carrying the seed to be sown,

They shall come back rejoicing,



carrying their sheaves.

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

**Reading II**

**Phil 1:4-6, 8-11**

Brothers and sisters:

I pray always with joy in my every prayer for all of you,  
because of your partnership for the gospel  
from the first day until now.

I am confident of this,  
that the one who began a good work in you  
will continue to complete it  
until the day of Christ Jesus.

God is my witness,  
how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

And this is my prayer:

that your love may increase ever more and more  
in knowledge and every kind of perception,  
to discern what is of value,  
so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,  
filled with the fruit of righteousness  
that comes through Jesus Christ  
for the glory and praise of God.



**Alleluia**

**Lk 3:4, 6**

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths:  
all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

**Gospel**

**Lk 3:1-6**

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar,  
when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea,  
and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee,  
and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region  
of Ituraea and Trachonitis,  
and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene,  
during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas,  
the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert.  
John went throughout the whole region of the Jordan,  
proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins,  
as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah:

*A voice of one crying out in the desert:*

*“Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make straight his paths.*

*Every valley shall be filled  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low.*

*The winding roads shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth,  
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”*



## Second Sunday of Advent 2024

### Homily

My Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

1. Today we lit another candle on the wreath as we celebrate the Second Sunday of Advent. There are four Sundays in Advent preparing us for Christmas.
2. Mary Jane Haemig of Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota researched the background on the Advent wreath that I think is worth looking into. “The concept of the Advent wreath originated among German Lutherans in the 16th century. However, it was not until three centuries later that Johann Hirich Wichern (1808-1881), a Lutheran pastor in Germany, was considered the inventor of the modern Advent Wreath.
3. “The custom gained ground among Protestant churches in Germany and evolved into the smaller wreath with four or five candles known today. Roman Catholics in Germany began to adopt the custom in the 1920s, and in the 1930s it spread to North America. Mary Jane’s research also indicates that the custom did not reach the United States until the 1930s.”<sup>1</sup>
4. It’s important to understand where things come from, like the Advent wreath, and who is behind the creation, like the Lutheran Pastor, Johann Hirich Wichern. When you understand the history and the people involved, it will help you have a deeper appreciation for whatever it is.

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia



5. Take a look at how Saint Luke started his Gospel about John the Baptist in the desert. Saint Luke wanted to give us some context of who-was-who back then because three years later these same names will come up at the end of the life of Jesus.
6. He gives us some of the names at the beginning of his Gospel so when he brings them up at the end of his Gospel, we will have some familiarity with who these people are. He confirms that Tiberius Caesar<sup>2</sup> is in control. He introduces us to the Governor in Jerusalem which is Pontius Pilate<sup>3</sup> and King Herod<sup>4</sup> was in Galilee. He even talks about the brother of Herod, Philip, whom John the Baptist goes after Herod later in the Gospel about how he married Philip's wife.<sup>5</sup> And we all know and remember that when Jesus was on trial with the Sanhedrin, it was Caiaphas,<sup>6</sup> the high priest, who ordered the death.
7. In a certain sense, Saint Luke is planting "seeds" in our minds and hearts with dropping these names so that we have a history of them which will make it more powerful when we hear their names again later in the Gospel.
8. In an earlier Gospel, we hear about how John the Baptist was sanctified in the womb by Jesus when the baby in her "womb leaped for joy."<sup>7</sup> So John, the Church teaches, that he was sanctified (his "road" was made straight) so that he would have this powerful mission of making the path straight for the Lord. We hear that John the Baptist is telling people to repent of their sins, to make things right and do the right things. Eventually, we hear that John will even start evangelizing King Herod to make things right with his marriage and eventually it gets John into some

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<sup>2</sup> Luke 3:1

<sup>3</sup> Luke 3:1

<sup>4</sup> Luke 1:5

<sup>5</sup> Mark 6:17

<sup>6</sup> John 18:13

<sup>7</sup> Luke 1:44



serious trouble. After Salome dances for King Herod, she ends the life of the Baptist with her command to fulfil the king's promise.<sup>8</sup>

9. We have a lot going on today in the readings. It might seem confusing or complicated at first, but the more you read the Scriptures the more you get to know these names and come to understand what all the roles are. And it makes sense to list all of these names at the beginning of the Church's year, Advent.
10. Okay, let's transition now from Church history with all of these names that Saint Luke gives us today and talk more specifically about you and me. How do we prepare for the coming of the Messiah? Christmas is coming soon which marks the birth of the Second person of the Holy Trinity. Let's prepare well and allow Jesus to be born in our lives in a more powerful way starting today.
11. John the Baptist quotes the Prophet Isaiah and says, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." You and I can change our crooked ways and make our paths straight. First of all, what makes a crooked path? Two things come to mind quickly for me and that is any kind of sin and any kind of obstacle that makes us go around it.
12. Sin is the first thing that we can take care of on our own. We usually can think about what we are doing wrong that is sinful and make a decision to change our life to avoid sin. Sure, we fall from time-to-time and can go to confession, but overall, we have the grace from God to overcome sin. We overcome sin in many different ways especially by prayer, fasting, formation, Sacraments and our will.
13. Obstacles, on-the-other hand, can be another story. Let's look at some examples that might illustrate how we can make a road straight. If you are trying to build a road over a hill, you could use some bulldozers or heavy

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<sup>8</sup> Mark 6:23. Salome dances for Herod



equipment to plow through the hill and make the road level and smooth. Another example is rather than building a road over a mountain, they now have equipment that allows construction safely through the mountain forming a tunnel for the road. This allows a straight path rather than winding over and around a mountain. My last example is going from one side of a river to the next. The obvious way is by building a bridge.

14. Now our own examples of removing obstacles in our own lives can be similar to that of building roads. If we have obstacles from our health, then we seek out medical professionals. If we have addictions, mental health issues or psychological struggles, we too can reach out to professionals for treatment. And, most especially, if we have relationship issues, we can build bridges rather than holding grudges and fighting others. These are some of the ways that we can deal with our obstacles of life and remove them or at least deal with them.
15. As a reminder, we are making straight our lives for God. John the Baptist was making the way straight for Jesus whom he eventually Baptized in the River Jordan.<sup>9</sup> How do we make straight our lives for Jesus? It is through prayer and obstacles sometimes need professional assistance. Whatever our situation in life is, it is prayer that builds the relationship with God and will prepare us more for Jesus to be born in our lives this Christmas in a more joyful way.
16. This is where I want to explore our sister Church, the Orthodox faith, and learn a little more about the whole Church (both East and West). As you may know, Constantine conquered Rome and legalized Christianity in 313 A.D.<sup>10</sup> Eventually, Constantine moves from Rome to Constantinople and establishes the “New Rome.” The Pope remained in Rome and the Patriarch is established in Constantinople (now Istanbul, Turkey). Today we have Pope Francis in Rome (Catholic) and Patriarch Bartholomeos in Constantinople (Orthodox). We can see this as East and West.

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<sup>9</sup> Luke 3:21-22

<sup>10</sup> Edict of Milan





17. One of the Patriarchs of Constantinople was St. John Chrysostom who teaches us about prayer. On the Vatican website they have some documents from him teaching us about prayer. In 398, he was the Archbishop of Constantinople and wrote much about the faith. He said that, “prayer is a precious way of communicating with God, it gladdens the soul and gives repose to its affections. You should not think of prayer as being a matter of words. It is a desire for God, an indescribable devotion, not of human origin, but the gift of God’s grace. As St. Paul says: we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.”<sup>11</sup>
18. Ultimately the answer to all of our challenges is prayer. If we want to make straight our paths we have to pray more. If we want to overcome our obstacles in life, we have to pray more. If we want to get rid of depression and anxiety, prayer is our key. The Eastern Father of the Church, St. John Chrysostom says that, “Anyone who receives from the Lord the gift of this type of prayer possesses a richness that is not to be taken from him, a heavenly food filling up the soul. Once he has tasted this food, he is set alight by an eternal desire for the Lord, the fiercest of fires lighting up his soul.”<sup>12</sup>
19. This is exactly what Saint Paul was speaking about in the second reading once we have a grasp on sin and obstacles. Here’s what he said, “And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.”
20. As we celebrate the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent, we have two candles to go before the birth of Jesus. Christmas is just around the corner but we still

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<sup>11</sup> A reading from the homilies of St. John Chrysostom (Hom 6 on Prayer).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. Hom 6 on Prayer.



have time to work on four things. The first thing we can work on is turning away from sin. This is something that we can do today. The other three things that I mentioned earlier in the homily are straightening our paths, like John the Baptist said, and that can take longer. We can use tools, not bulldozers, tunnels or bridges, but saying some precious words like, “I am sorry,” and “I love you.” Also, do not be afraid to ask for help from professionals or even reach out to the parish for help and guidance. We are here to help and can give you some referrals.

21. My friends, today we lit the second candle on the Advent wreath. This wreath is a reminder that Christmas is coming soon so we have to prepare well for the birth of Jesus. Ultimately, the Advent wreath doesn't really matter to God because there is only one thing that God wants and that is you! My friends, the “candle” that needs to be lit and shine brightly is the light of your heart and my heart! And if we open our hearts to God everyday that's when we experience Christmas!