

Today's readings are very suitable for the troubled times we are going through now. Prophet Isaiah gives a ray of hope during the difficult times of Israelites and we hear: *Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God.*". In the responsorial psalm we cry out to God with the psalmist, "Lord let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation". And finally, in the Gospel we hear John proclaiming about the coming of the savior: "*One mightier than I is coming after me.*"

During the season of Advent this year, we are waiting for two types of comings. First, the whole world, Christians and non-Christians alike is waiting for a savior, a redeemer, or a deliverer in the form of a vaccine. Which the experts say will save us from this pandemic which has already taken many lives worldwide, more than 278 thousand in USA alone.

This reminds me of the people of Israel, who have been also waiting and waiting for generations for a Savior, a deliverer, who would deliver them from Roman occupation. Their waiting was not baseless, not empty one, because God himself had promised to their ancestors, which we read in Isaiah 59:20, that he would send a deliverer, a savior. As in the case of waiting for the corona vaccine, millions of people died while waiting for the savior.

Lots and lots of preparations are required to receive this deliverer, corona vaccine which will save us from physical death. It is a logistic nightmare to store and transport millions and millions of doses of vaccine to make them accessible. In many countries like India, the preparation poses a big challenge as some of the remote areas are accessible only after walking 6 hours or more. How to carry those vaccine under subzero temperature. How to preserve the vaccine in places where there is no electricity? At any event, a lot of preparation and planning is required on distributions- who will receive the vaccines first.

In order to receive the savior Jesus Christ who saves us from spiritual death a lot of preparations are required. And this is to be done not by the government or the authorities as in the case of corona vaccine, but by each individual. And this second Sunday of Advent tells us how to prepare for the coming of the savior

In the second reading Peter speaks strongly against those who denied the second coming of Christ says that the day of the Lord will come in good time. "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief". But God is patient with you, and does not wish that anyone should perish but that all should come to repentance.

He speaks of the heavens and the elements being dissolved by fire. His point is that all that is not holy will be destroyed and there will be a new creation. It is important therefore to let God's holiness and love take over our lives.

Gospel continues with the same theme of preparation to receive the savior.

The central figure in today's Gospel is John the Baptist and he is presented as preaching in the desert asking his listeners to prepare for the coming of the savior, deliverer, Jesus Christ. "*Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths,*" he says

By this time Jesus was already born but had not started his public life. John the Baptist and his cousin Jesus were only about six months apart as we can deduct from Mary's visit to Elizabeth. So, John the Baptist's role was to prepare the people to accept him and welcome him and his teachings. The essential message of John the Baptist was one of repentance and conversion. To repent in the Gospel involves a radical transformation in our way

of living. It means a conversion, a real turning around, a re-directing of one's whole life.

Though John's preaching was meant to prepare the people for the first coming when Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem. But, today, his preaching is equally relevant for his second coming at the end of the world or his coming at our personal death. And the best way to prepare for this is through repentance and reconversion. And this season of advent gives you such a chance.