

# 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent

Year C - (Series 2)

## *The Joy Of Salvation.*

*We celebrate the marvels God has worked for us in sending us his mercy and forgiveness, and calling us to share his glory. We await with joyful hope that 'Day of the Lord' when his work in us will be completed.*

*(Readings: Baruch 5: 1-9. Philippians 1: 3-6, 8-11. Luke 3: 1-6.)*

Our Gospel reading today begins with a short history lesson. Luke takes us back to the 15<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. He reminds us that Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judaea at that time, and that Herod was tetrarch of Galilee.

This, then, was the setting in which St Luke would introduce the 'preparatory' ministry of John the Baptist. Once the stage was set, he wrote, 'The word of God came to John in the wilderness.'

And that was his main interest. So why the history lesson? What did it matter who the emperor in Rome was? And why mention who Caesar's subordinate rulers were? More personally, what does this brief section of Scripture have to say to us today?

Well, Luke wanted his readers – and today, that is us – to know that he was not writing about a fictitious character in a mythical legend. He was reporting an actual event; that something new, something earth-shattering was happening!

John the Baptist introduced the 'event' by saying, "Prepare a way for the Lord." In other words, "Get ready for God, because he is soon to appear." And what's more, "He is coming in a way he has never come before." On a particular date in the calendar, and at a particular place on the map, God entered, and he imposed himself on history. And, just as the Baptist had prophesied, God did it in a way few expected.

The ancient world looked for the Christ to appear as a mighty, all-conquering warrior. But instead, he came as a babe, born in a humble, lowly manger. 30 years later, as John was preaching, Jesus just walked upon the scene, looking like any other ordinary man. However, the weeks and months that followed showed him to be anything but. They showed him to be the most extraordinary man who ever lived. He inspired 12 men, from very different walks of life, to give up everything and follow him, – men who became his loyal friends.

Jesus taught with such authority that they never doubted him. He fulfilled all the prophecies relating to the Messiah. He healed all the sick who came to him. And he raised the dead to life. There could be only one explanation. This ordinary looking man from Galilee was, the Messiah, the Only Begotten Son of God. That is what Luke wanted us to know, the first coming of Christ.

Given the almost abstract dislocation of more than two thousand years, we may find it a little easier to think of the Messiah being born as Man. The concept is, after all, somewhat more removed from our perceived reality of today. Be that as it may, many of the people who lived in Jesus' time found it well nigh impossible to accept. And that is not really so difficult to understand. If we put ourselves in their place for a moment, how many of us would find it easy to think of God being alive in our world today?

We may be able to imagine him returning at some future date, but actually living among us, today, walking among us, here and now? That's another matter. He can feel so far removed from us that we need to remind ourselves, he is indeed, with us, and right now!

It's more than possible that some of us expect Jesus to appear in a dramatic and grandiose way. But that is not the way he works.

Whether we know it or not, Jesus is with us, and in so very many, simple ways. The problem we have is that we just don't see or recognise him. For example, we can be so weighed down by the demands and complications of life that we simply fail to recognise how Jesus is working alongside us, helping us to solve those very problems.

We all have burdens to carry in our daily lives, but we often fail to appreciate that Jesus is here, giving us the strength to carry them.

We can know that Jesus is with us, here and now, because, as he said to his disciples, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of you." And yet, somehow the question remains. Are we really conscious of the presence of Jesus whenever we pray as a community? If we are in any doubt, perhaps this is something we need to pray about, and to think about and, moreover, to practise a keener awareness about.

As he promised, Jesus is with us every time we celebrate Mass, speaking to us through the words of our scripture readings, his message gently permeating into our minds, and into our hearts. He is with us in the Eucharist, when he comes to us under the appearances of bread and wine, to be our spiritual food.

That said, the routine of the Mass can become so familiar, so ordinary, that we need to remind ourselves that he is with us, speaking to us, and strengthening us through his blessed Sacrament.

And he is with us in the people we encounter, as we go about our daily lives. He is present in our loved ones, and in our families, and in our friends, and in our colleagues at work. He is with us in the shabby beggar we contrive not to meet in the street. He is with us in the sick and in the suffering, whom we only grudgingly visit. He is with us in the alcoholic, and in the drop-out, and in the lonely... He is in so very many people, and in so very many ways.

Advent is a time when we think most particularly about the coming of Jesus. We believe he came into our world at that moment in history, identified by Luke, that is why we come to church! And if that is right, then it follows that we believe that he will appear again, at some unknown date in the future, when he will return to judge the world. Until then, he is with us, and he remains with us, unseen, but very real, nonetheless.

So. Advent is a time to consider these three comings of Jesus.

1. - that he came two thousand years ago.
2. - that he is here with us in the Eucharist, and in the ordinary events of our lives.
3. - that he will come again on the last day.

Until then, may we find Christ in all his comings.