

2nd Sunday of Advent (B)
(Isaiah 40:1-5. 9-11 / Mark 1:1-6)
10.12.2017

Dear brothers and sisters,

We have just heard the opening words of St Mark's gospel: "The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ". **The gospel is good news.** The gospel is not a book in which is written down all we should and should not do. The gospel is good news, the good news of the coming and the presence of the Lord Jesus among us.

To prepare ourselves to welcome the Lord's coming in our midst, St Mark continues: "A voice cries in the wilderness: Prepare a way for the Lord": "**A voice**": that word is worth noting. We live in a culture where smart phones and internet reign; a world in which we are unceasingly bombarded by words and images. These words should be words which convey a message; but most of the time we don't even pay attention to them. They should be a means of communication; but in fact most of the time they are means of isolation.

It is in this world of Informatic Technology, which is our world, that we are invited to listen to "a voice". If there is a voice, there is someone who wants to speak to us and who has something to say to us. This voice is a prophetic voice, the voice of John the Baptist who invites us to prepare the way for the Lord who is coming among us. John the Baptist uses the very words the prophet Isaiah addressed to the Jews when they were in exile in Babylon many centuries beforehand. With these words Isaiah had announced the immediate liberation of the exiles from captivity and their return to Jerusalem. We know that the return of the exiles to Jerusalem happened. Just as those exiled came back from Babylon to Jerusalem, so in the same way, the Lord will come to be with us very soon and He will remain with us for ever. The voice of John Baptist is **a source of hope** for us. The Lord is coming to open a future before us.

We have to prepare a way for the Lord in our lives, in our hearts and minds.

The Lord is coming to visit and comfort by his loving presence not only those who feel lonely, but also those who are depressed and are even tempted by suicide.

The Lord is coming to visit with his healing touch those who are sick.

The Lord is coming to console those who mourn.

The Lord is coming to bring rest to those who are overburdened.

The Lord is coming to enlighten our darkness.

The Lord is coming to liberate us from our addictions, to set us free from our sin, guilt and shame, and to deliver us from all our fears – the fear of death included.

The coming of the Lord among us is really good news. The coming of the Lord is a real source of hope. There is a future available to us. The Lord who loves us is coming to walk the path of life with us, where we are; He is coming to give us a share in his victory over sin and death. What we really need in life is a loving presence by our side. The presence of the Lord who comes among us is precisely that loving presence.

To welcome the good news of the gospel, to welcome the Lord who is coming to live among us, we have **to repent**, that is to say to become aware, to recognize and to confess that we are

sinner. We have to repent and acknowledge that, most of the time, we are so caught up with ourselves, or we are so busy with everything (which in fact means nothing!), that we forget the presence of the Lord by our side. The Lord is coming to save us, but in order to welcome him, we have to recognize our need to be saved; we have to open our hearts to welcome the Lord's salvation in our lives. We have to repent and confess our sins as the way to prepare our hearts and minds to welcome the Lord and the saving grace He brings. If we are sick and want to be healed, we have to go to the doctor and tell him or her what's wrong with us. If we say nothing, the doctor cannot help us. We have to say to the Lord that we are sinners and need his saving help if we are to know his salvation.

The call addressed to us during this Advent season is a call to come back to the Lord in prayer, and especially personal prayer. Prayer is a moment in which we dwell within ourselves as we wait for the Lord's coming. Prayer is a moment when we can become aware what we need to repent of: our lukewarmness, our dispersion, in one word our sin.

When we come back to the Lord in prayer, through us it is the whole of humanity which is brought back to God. We often lament about those who do not believe, those who believe in a different way than we do, or those who have forgotten the grace of their baptism. The ball is in our court! Let us repent, let us come back to the Lord, let us welcome the Lord and then we will see how, through us, the world will be brought back to the Lord. We are all interdependent. What each one of us does has an influence upon others. What each one of us omits to do has an influence upon others. Let us repent and come back to the Lord, and the Lord will look after all our brothers and sisters in humanity in need of salvation, even if they don't know their need right now.