

Homily 2nd Sunday in Advent 2021- Let Us Make the Advent Journey Together

One of the most memorable journeys I have ever made was last Christmas. Deep in Lockdown due to Covid 19 Alice and I attended the Christmas Eve Mass at Holy Redeemer and then on impulse set out on a 200-mile round trip to London to deliver Christmas presents to our sons' families. On the journey we sang Christmas Carols ranging from Hark the Herald Angels Sing to O Come All Ye Faithful. (Anyone who heard me sing last week will feel sorry for Alice as I subjected her to my dulcet tones.) The journey was so memorable because it was so meaningful. As the shepherds brought gifts to the Infant Jesus, we too were the bearers of gifts symbolic of those first offerings to The New-born King as we laid them on the doorsteps of our sons' homes, rang the bell and retreated 10 metres.

Today's First Reading describes the journey of the promised joyful return of the Jewish exiles of the Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem in the 6th century BC. This passage however, looks beyond that historic return to the journey of redeemed humanity, all of us, to the heavenly New Jerusalem of Christ the King.

The Responsorial Psalm is one of the so-called "Songs of Ascent" which pilgrims sang on the journey up to the holy city of Jerusalem to celebrate annual feasts to worship in the Temple. Jesus, Mary and Joseph no doubt sang it on their pilgrimages for The Passover. In the hymn, the pilgrims remember the joyful journey of the returning exiles to Jerusalem after that same Babylonian captivity 500 years or so before. This Psalm can also be seen as the hymn of all the faithful as we continue our earthly journeys with the hope that we may one day ascend to worship God Our Father in the New heavenly Jerusalem Jesus has prepared for us.

In the Second Reading, St. Paul prays for the Christian community at Philippi. He writes to praise them for their growth in charity, characterised by their "love in action." Such charitable works, he tells them, are God's will for their journey through life.

In the Gospel Reading, we learn that St. John the Baptist is the mysterious, unidentified prophetic voice journeying in the wilderness from Isaiah's prophecy in the 8th century BC ([Is 40:3-5](#)). The Baptist heralds the coming of God among His people and the radical change His arrival will have on the world by 'making His path straight'.

The three readings remind us that we are all making a journey to the promised heavenly Jerusalem and the Season of Advent is an especially appropriate time to reflect on that journey. As a priestly, kingly and prophetic people, we must take the time to prepare ourselves to relive the events of the First Advent of the Messiah remaining vigilant and prepared for the possibility that Christ could return at any moment.

Like the Jewish pilgrims on their way to The Temple in Jerusalem, like Mary and Joseph on their journey to Bethlehem, like Alice and I as we journeyed to London last Christmas Eve, we too should sing holy hymns of thanksgiving for the birth of our Saviour (and for our Redemption and our freedom from the captivity of sin and death) and this Advent straight His path' by repentance of our sins, loving ourselves and loving our neighbour as we journey together towards the Birth of Jesus in that lowly stable.

Praise be Jesus Christ