

2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT, B
PREPARE THE WAY – IF JESUS CAME TO YOUR HOUSE

“A voice cries in the wilderness: ‘Prepare a way for the Lord; make His path straight.’” (Mk. 1: 3)

This is the first Sunday since our return to Church after the second national lockdown. It has been a very challenging and life-altering period for each of us in more ways than one. But we have every reason to thank God for sustaining and shielding us. No one can ever be careful enough. It is with this sentiment of gratitude that I welcome you back “Home!” I pray we make the best use of this opportunity to prepare properly for the Coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Thinking about preparation, the theme of today’s celebration is that of an invitation to prepare for the coming of the Lord. The voice of prophet Isaiah re-echoes in the voice of John the Baptist with the same profoundness: “A voice cries in the wilderness: ‘Prepare a way for the Lord, make His paths straight’” (Is. 40: 3; Mk. 1: 3). As we listen to these words repeated in the First Reading (Is. 40: 1-5,9-11) and the Gospel (Mk. 1: 1-8); and even as they resonate in the Psalm (Ps.84) and the Second Reading (2 Pet. 3: 8-14), they compel us to reassess our scale of priority as we prepare for Christmas.

A poem by Lois Blanchard Eades, a Wesleyan poet who lived in Dickson, Tennessee: *If Jesus Came to Your House* quizzes out what should be our level of preparedness:

IF JESUS CAME TO YOUR HOUSE

*If Jesus came to your house to spend a day or two
If he came unexpectedly, I wonder what you’d do.
Oh, I know you’d give your nicest room to such an honoured Guest,
And all the food you’d serve to Him would be the very best,
And you keep assuring Him you’re glad to have Him there
That serving Him in your own home is joy beyond compare.
But when you saw Him coming, would you meet Him at the door
With arms outstretched in welcome to your heavenly Visitor?
Or would you have to change your clothes before you let Him in?
Or hide some magazines and put the Bible where they’d been?
Would you turn off the radio and hope He hadn’t heard?
And wish you hadn’t uttered that last, loud, hasty word?
Would you hide your worldly music and put some hymn books out?
Could you let Jesus walk right in, or would you rush about?
And I wonder if the Savior spent a day or two with you,*

*Would you go right on doing the things you always do?
Would you go right on saying the things you always say?
Would life for you continue as it does from day today?
Would your family conversation keep up its usual pace?
And would you find it hard each meal to say a table grace?
Would you sing the songs you always sing and read the books you read,
And let him know the things on which your mind and spirit feed?
Would you take Jesus with you everywhere you'd planned to go?
Or would you, maybe, change your plans for just a day or so?
Would you be glad to have Him meet your very closest friends?
Or would you hope they'd stay away until His visit ends?
Would you be glad to have Him stay forever on and on?
Or would you sigh with great relief when He, at last, was gone?
It might be interesting to know the things that you would do?
If Jesus Christ in person came to spend some time with you.*

What would you do, if Jesus knocks on your door? If you would readily open the door, welcome Him and get on with your normal life, then you are prepared and ready for Him; if you would excuse Him for a minute to make some adjustments, if you would not be able to get on with life because your life is unbecoming, then you are not ready. But it is not late to be ready. Just as we have started making material and physical preparations, so too we should start preparing spiritually for the Lord, so that when He comes, we would not need to make any adjustments and changes to our lives.

Let us pick out some elements in the Gospel to sift the messages with which to challenge our lives during this season:

1. ***“A voice cries”***: That was the voice of the forerunner of the Messiah that was to “prepare a people fit for the Lord” (Lk. 1: 17). He was the “Elijah” that was to come before the Messiah. John the Baptist was that *voice*. Within our context, the *voice* that cries is the Voice of God, of Jesus, of the Holy Spirit, from the Scriptures, from within us, sometimes it is the voice of your priest; could be the voice of parents, teachers, anyone. Today, we hear so many voices crying: the poor, the needy, the homeless, the abused, single parents and their beloved children in broken homes, captives, persecuted Christians, the innocent in our prisons. Do we listen? Every voice that cries needs attention and a response.
2. ***In the wilderness (or desert)***: The wilderness or desert is a dry waterless and lifeless space. This could refer to those dry and dark spots in our lives – our

weaknesses, those sins we love to commit and the un-confessed sins. They could be our setbacks in life, our illnesses, frustrations and all negative things around. The voice cries for these dark corners to be changed; to be brought to life; for restoration and wholeness. The voice cries in the darkness of our heart, our family, our society, Church, schools; the darkness of our culture, media, boardrooms, the parliaments; in every place where God and His influence need to be heard and felt. The voice cries for a return of the Holy One. On the other hand, the wilderness and the desert were places of encounter in the biblical times: Jesus always went away to these lonely places to be *alone with the Alone*. These dark spots in our lives and society could be the openings for us to encounter God and His redeeming love in Christ. Do not be afraid of these unpleasant places in your life, confront them and present them to the coming Lord.

3. ***Let every valley be filled in:*** The valleys refer to the low lands; the low points in our lives; the omissions, the good things we have left undone. The *voice* cries for us to make up for them; to make repairs; to heal. Remember the Lord challenged us to feed the hungry; satisfy the thirsty, clothe the naked, visit the sick; and to love God with all our heart, might and soul and our neighbours as ourselves. The *voice* also exhorts us to reconnect with God through prayer and encounter in His Word.

Let every mountain and hill be laid low: The mountains and hills are those elements in our lives that make living the Godly life difficult: pride and haughtiness; wickedness and sinfulness; unforgiving heart and envy; indifference and insensitivity. The *voice* cries that these should be laid low, extirpated; that we should eschew from such acts and ways. We need to take these away from our lives. Laying low the mountains and hills call for a life of the humble spirit, of love, forgiveness, simplicity and gratitude to God. These ways, we make the way into our hearts straight for the Saviour to *come in and sup with us*.

Dear friends, the exhortation of St. Peter in the Second reading is very timely: “Since everything is coming to an end like this, you should be living holy and saintly lives while you wait and long for the Day of God to come ... So then, my friends, while you are waiting, do your best to live lives without spot or stain so that He will find you at peace.”