

Second Sunday of Advent – December 10, 2017 – Our Lady of Perpetual Help

Scripture Reading: IS 40:1-5, 9-11

Comfort, give comfort to my people,
says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and
proclaim to her that her service is at an end,
her guilt is expiated; indeed, she has received from the
hand of the LORD double for all her sins.

A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the
LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for
our God! Every valley shall be filled in,
every mountain and hill shall be made low;
the rugged land shall be made a plain,
the rough country, a broad valley.
Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together;
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

Go up on to a high mountain, Zion, herald of glad
tidings; cry out at the top of your voice,
Jerusalem, herald of good news! Fear not to cry out
and say to the cities of Judah: Here is your God!
Here comes with power the Lord GOD,
who rules by his strong arm; here is his reward with
him, his recompense before him. Like a shepherd he
feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs,
carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with
care.

Psalm: Ps 84: 9ab-10, 11-12, 13-14

**R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us
your salvation.**

I will hear what God proclaims;
the LORD—for he proclaims peace to his people.
Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear him,
glory dwelling in our land. **(R)**

Kindness and truth shall meet;
justice and peace shall kiss.
Truth shall spring out of the earth,
and justice shall look down from heaven. **(R)**

The LORD himself will give his benefits;
our land shall yield its increase.
Justice shall walk before him,
and prepare the way of his steps. **(R)**



Scripture Reading: 2 Peter 3:8-14

Do not ignore this one fact, beloved,
that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years
and a thousand years like one day.
The Lord does not delay his promise, as some regard
"delay," but he is patient with you,
not wishing that any should perish
but that all should come to repentance.
But the day of the Lord will come like a thief,
and then the heavens will pass away with a mighty
roar and the elements will be dissolved by fire,
and the earth and everything done on it will be found
out.

Since everything is to be dissolved in this way,
what sort of persons ought you to be,
conducting yourselves in holiness and devotion,
waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of
God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved
in flames and the elements melted by fire.
But according to his promise we await new heavens
and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.
Therefore, beloved, since you await these things,
be eager to be found without spot or blemish before
him, at peace.

Gospel: Mark 1:1-8

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:
*Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you;
he will prepare your way.*

*A voice of one crying out in the desert:
"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths."*

John the Baptist appeared in the desert
proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the
forgiveness of sins.

People of the whole Judean countryside
and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem
were going out to him
and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River
as they acknowledged their sins.
John was clothed in camel's hair,
with a leather belt around his waist.
He fed on locusts and wild honey.
And this is what he proclaimed:
"One mightier than I is coming after me.
I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his
sandals. I have baptized you with water;
he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

John the Baptist's life was fueled by one burning passion -- to point others to Jesus Christ and to the coming of his kingdom. Who is John the Baptist and what is the significance of his message for our lives? Scripture tells us that John was filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15, 41) by Christ himself, whom Mary had just conceived by the Holy Spirit. When Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth John leapt in her womb as they were filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:41). The fire of the Spirit dwelt in John and made him the forerunner of the coming Messiah. John was led by the Spirit into the wilderness prior to his ministry where he was tested and grew in the word of God. John's clothing was reminiscent of the prophet Elijah (see Kings 1:8). John broke the prophetic silence of the previous centuries when he began to speak the word of God to the people of Israel. His message was similar to the message of the Old Testament prophets who chided the people of God for their unfaithfulness and who tried to awaken true repentance in them. Among the people unconcerned with the things of God, it was his work to awaken their interest, unsettle them from their complacency, and arouse in them enough good will to recognize and receive Christ when he came. Do you point others to Christ in the way you live, work, and speak?

Why did Jesus say that John the Baptist was more than a prophet? (Luke 7:26). John was the voice of the Consoler who is coming (John 1:23; Isaiah 40:1-3). He completed the cycle of prophets begun by Elijah (Matt. 11:13-14). What the prophets had carefully searched for and angels longed to see, now came to completion as John made the way ready for the coming of the Messiah, God's Anointed Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. With John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit begins the restoration to the human race of the "divine likeness", prefiguring what would be achieved with and in the Lord Jesus. John's baptism was for repentance -- turning away from sin and taking on a new way of life according to God's word. Our baptism in Jesus Christ by water and the Spirit results in a new birth and entry into God's kingdom as his beloved sons and daughters (John 3:5). Jesus is ready to give us the fire of his Spirit that we may radiate the joy and truth of the gospel to a world in desperate need of God's light and truth. His word has power to change and transform our lives that we may be lights pointing others to Christ. Like John the Baptist, we too are called to give testimony to the light and truth of Jesus Christ. Are you eager to hear God's word and to be changed by it through the power of the Holy Spirit?

"Lord, let your light burn brightly in my heart that I may know the joy and freedom of your kingdom. Fill me with your Holy Spirit and empower me to witness the truth of your gospel and to point others to Jesus Christ."

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. Who are others who have "prepared the way" for faith in your life? How have they done that? Do you make a positive impact to others? Why or why not?
2. What one habit or attitude of yours can you change in order to make yourself more ready for the coming of Jesus? How? What is stopping you from doing so?
3. In what way have you been "a voice crying out in the wilderness" about people being treated unfairly or unjustly? In what ways could you be?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

1. Be aware of opportunities for bringing the Good News into your family life, your work life, your social life.
2. Call the church office of OLPH and ask if your SCC can be ministers of hospitality at a particular Mass time.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

ALL: God of all, prepare our hearts for the coming Jesus Christ. Prepare our minds for the understanding of your creation—world. Prepare our hands to serve you in those around us. Prepare us to meet you more fully today and every day and be the best version of our selves. Amen!