

**First Reading: Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11**

**Second Reading: 2Peter 3:8-14**

**Gospel: Mark 1:1-8**

### **JESUS: MESSIAH AND SON OF GOD**

The first Sunday of Advent invited us to stay awake and be vigilant for we do not know when the Lord will come. The second Sunday invites us to (1) Prepare the way of the Lord (2) Know Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God and (3) Allow prayer nourish our relationship with God.

In the months leading to the just ended elections, we saw many projects commissioned. We saw many roads being graded. We saw schools and hospitals opened. Some of us understood these as development. Others saw them as election propaganda. And still others just ignored and concentrated on what interested them. The one question we may want to ask is: what did all these activities prepare us for?

The prophet Isaiah proclaims: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (v3). Note that it is not the prophet's way, but the way of the Lord. His plea is the Church's call for all of us during this advent season. Both Isaiah and the Church remind us of the significance of advent: Preparing the way of the Lord.

What does this mean for me? It would mean several things. First, this invites me to recognize that the God for whom I prepare the way is a just God. Here justice is to be understood as the right relationship with God, myself and other people. This demands a faith response from me as a Christian.

Second, my faith calls me to work for justice. This includes working in service of the people in need, pursuing peace and defending the life, dignity and rights of all men, women and children. When I do this, I am simply responding to the call of Jesus. I am listening to the Holy Spirit which Jesus has bestowed on every confirmed Catholic. I respond to the challenge that comes from the prophets. I respond to the living tradition of my Church.

Third, preparing the way for the Lord may include my efforts to feed my hungry relatives and friends. It may also include taking care of my nieces, nephews, grandchildren who have been orphaned due to HIV/AIDS and other illnesses. Preparing the way may entail being a source of comfort to those in sorrow and consoling the bereaved. Preparing the way may include my efforts to welcome strangers and taking care of my elderly grandparents.

Fourthly, all these efforts will become meaningful when I begin to concretely address the causes of these sufferings and injustices in my society, home and community. As a Christian and Catholic, it is my calling to be part of the process of transformation which begins within my heart and then goes out to the social structures.

#### ***But who is this Lord? Who am I preparing the way for?***

The beginning of the Gospel of Mark, which we read today, presents us with the identity of the one for whom we prepare the way. Not only does he bring good news, he is also the good news. He is "Jesus Christ, the Son of God". He is the Messiah and Son of God. This is the Jesus Mark wants us to know, welcome and become friends with. Part of the good news that Jesus brings includes

forgiving and forgetting the wrongs that others have committed against us. Why and how can we do this? We can do this because it is one way for us to prepare for the coming of the Lord. About how; we go back to the gospels where we see Jesus always teaching us about unlimited and unconditional forgiveness. We find this teaching in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus says, "You have learnt how it was said: 'Eye for eye and tooth for tooth.' But I say this to you: offer the wicked man no resistance... You have learnt how it was said; 'You must love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say this to you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:38, 43). From this, not only are we told what to do but also how to do it. We are to pray for those who persecute us. This might mean that each time we meet or remember the person who hurt us we say a simple prayer such as "Lord, have mercy on us all". This is a prayer both for us and for our enemy. The prayer for mercy puts us both in the right relationship with God and ourselves.

The success of our efforts would certainly be assured when we begin to make prayer the centre of our lives. This means that as Christians and Zambians, our special relationship with God and one another should be nourished and sustained by prayer. We cannot but be constant at prayer in view of the coming of our Lord. The Church reminds us that through prayer we engage in the battle for peace for "prayer opens the heart not only to a deep relationship with God but also to an encounter with others marked by respect, understanding, esteem and love. Prayer instills courage and lends support to all true friends of peace, those who love peace and strive to promote it in the various circumstances in which they live" (SDC, #519). So prepare the way of the Lord, receive Jesus the Messiah and Son of God and while you are waiting for the coming of our Lord, strive to be found by him at peace without spot or blemish (2Pt 3:14); and pray always.

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. What areas of my life block me from developing a deep relationship with God?
2. Am I willing to let go of this/these to prepare myself adequately for Jesus' coming?
3. Do I set aside time to pray despite my busy schedule to get divine insights?

### **Sketch**

Have someone to act as a man who always wants to be in leadership positions simply for fame. To do this, he bribes members in his Christian community to vote for him. He is hard working but members resent his power-hungry attitude which leads to bribing. He listens to the Gospel about preparing the way for the Lord and changes his attitude towards leadership and never takes bribes. He and his community are happy.

### **Prayers**

1. God our Father, we thank you for the many opportunities you offer us to reflect on our lives so that we can grow towards you. We ask you to send us the Holy Spirit to guide us on our journey towards you, *Lord hear us! Lord graciously hear us.*
2. Father, we ask you to bless those who are often hungry, deprived of education and have limited employment opportunities. We pray that our Government provides a conducive environment for employment so that such people are able to earn an income that assures their human dignity. *Lord hear us! Lord graciously hear us.*
3. We also pray for leaders in our Church so that they lead lives that witness to your love so that the flock can be inspired to lead exemplary Christian lives too. *Lord hear us! Lord graciously hear us.*