

PREPARING THE WAY THROUGH RECONCILIATION

One message seems to come out loudly and forcefully from the readings of today as we step into the Second Sunday of our preparation for the coming of our Lord. We hear it in the First Reading and again it pounds even harder in the Gospel. That message is; *Prepare a way for the Lord* make a straight highway for our Lord ..+

The Bembas say, *wakwensha ubushiku, bamutasha ngabwacha.* Literally meaning, it is only when the night's journey is over that one thanks his or her companion. Our friends from Chipata also say, *kavinavinana, unkumayangana kumwamba, mwine kungakuchere.* Literally meaning as you dance, you have to keep on checking and looking on the watch. You may find yourself going home when the night is completely gone with the morning just around the corner.

What then does it mean *to prepare a way for the Lord?* It means that central to our preparation of the way for the Lord in our time is conversion of heart. It means a timely preparing of our hearts so that the coming of our Lord either at Christmas or at the end of time does not surprise us. Our Lord Jesus Christ must not still find the old sinned self. The Lord must not find us the same quarrelsome and uncompromising person we have always been. Advent is an opportune time to commit ourselves to do one thing before the Lord comes. Each one of us knows himself or herself better. Each one of us knows, for example, how many people we have offended, what we have done against our own Christian life and goodness and above all, we know how much we have offended the living God. Preparing the way in this sense may mean taking time to reflect deeply about my Christian way of life. It is making a journey back into one's heart to see the things which stifled the goodness which God had originally shared with us at creation. Genesis is unambiguous about our original goodness and the original beauty of our environment. There was no sin and there were no such things as global warming or environmental degradation. In fact after creating everything, God himself *saw* that all he had made was very good+ (Genesis 1, 31). It is in this respect, that all of us have to begin by going into ourselves to see people we have hurt knowingly or unknowingly. We have dented the good image God had created us with and also have seen how much we have contributed to the disfigurement of this world. The whole world today is bleeding because of what we have done to the environment. Here in towns, it could be through garbage which we put anywhere and everywhere. We throw "Shake Shake" containers, "maheu" and containers of water all over our streets.

Preparing the way could then mean reconciling with ourselves, with others, with the environment and with our God. Reconciliation is going back home to the father who loves us so much. Like the prodigal son, we must all say, I will set out and go back to my father and say to him, *Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.* Reconciliation is a deep

en the way they should have been. In other words, many good things. But we also know that there are many things which are not going right due to our selfishness, due to some of our leaders who are not serving our country faithfully and honestly. We have to acknowledge the fact that our lives and our country are in need of healing through reconciliation which is truly free from political manipulation. There are valleys that we need to fill as Christians, as politicians and as civil society. We can take this moment of grace to overcome tribalism, corruption and adultery. In the Second Reading, Paul puts everything into perspective when he writes, *“The Lord is not being slow to carry out his promise, as anybody else might be called slow; but he is being patient with you all, wanting nobody to be lost and everybody to be brought to change his or her ways. We should accept that we do not own anything here on earth but that we are only stewards in trust. As such, we should always and everywhere choose to honour courage, justice, prudence, humility, wisdom and above all personal integrity. May our Lord find us ready in prayer, and genuinely reconciled. Amen!*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING IN SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

- Can you give an example from the Old Testament where reconciliation is graphically and dramatically given?
- Have I ever felt a serious need for reconciliation, either for something I have done to someone or someone has done to me?
- What is the biggest obstacle to reconciliation and how can I overcome it?

SKETCH

Have someone to act as a man with a wife and 3 children. He comes late from work most days in the week because he has a girlfriend and does not participate in family meals and other affairs. When the wife asks him, he threatens to chase her away. She is full of resentment of the husband and does not ask him anymore. The husband sees how his wife is suffering and how his children's schoolwork suffers because of the family situation. He realises his mistake and gets reconciled with God first and then his family. He terminates his outside relationship. The family is happy again.

COMMUNITY PRAYERS

- Lord, you remind us that your yoke is easy and your burden light, enable us to ease the yoke and burdens of one another, especially the poor by giving us the courage to challenge our unjust structures here in Zambia, *Lord, hear our prayer! Lord graciously hear us!*
- Lord, you come to speak the human word of God's care and tenderness; we pray that you help us to show our care for one another and for the environment. *Lord, hear our prayer! Lord graciously hear us!*
- Lord, you come to us as a sign of reconciliation, help all who are living in division and dissension to experience your forgiveness, *Lord, hear our prayer! Lord graciously hear us!*