

Called Once Again

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

CYCLE C

Baruch 5:1-9
Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11
Luke 3:1-6

GATHERING

(A lighted votive candle representing Jesus, the Messiah, sits on a table. Four free standing books are placed around the candle, making a box to shield the light from view. Another candle and seasonal greens are kept on reserve.)

As we approach the celebration of Jesus' coming, the scriptures remind us that only in Jesus will we find forgiveness, justice and peace. The community begins with some sharing of how members live in response to the Gospel call to social justice.

OPENING PRAYER

(The hymn, "O Come Divine Messiah" is played. It may be found on Utube. As it is sung, one book at a time is removed so that the light is progressively revealed.)

Leader: God our Father, we rejoice in anticipation of the coming of your son and our Redeemer. Give us the grace to fully receive him, with open hearts, with open minds and joyful

voices. Let the peace and love that radiates from his perfection be reflected in what we say and do each day.

All: We pray with loving hearts.

(The leader places a second candle on the table and invites members to arrange seasonal greens around both candles to form an Advent wreath.)

Focus Question

What is the month of December like for you?

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

Commentary

Hebrew Scriptures relate for us a story of an expectant people. From early in their history, the Jews revealed their hunger for redemption and salvation through the promised Messiah. Prophets came and prophets passed on, but the promise of messianic salvation and redemption were, for so many, merely hollow words. The Chosen People had, as we of the New Covenant have had, on and off again relationships with God. The whole array of prophets, proclaiming messages of hope and challenge, were distrusted and misunderstood. Then came John, the Prophet of Promise, powerful and convincing, a voice calling out to all a universal message of salvation: a new message of challenge and hope.

The passage of Baruch is one of celebration and joy. It seems to parallel Luke's Gospel. When the Messiah comes, *valleys will be leveled, mountains made low and rough places made smooth*. The promise of the kingdom will be realized. Through the Promised One, we are *called again*, brought to the forgiveness of our sin, to the knowledge of God's love, and to a deeper understanding about the conduct of our lives.

Advent is a time of contemplation, of hope and encouragement. We see before us the unfolding of the salvation story. The promised Messiah truly comes and is present to us. John is saying that if we turn to God with all our hearts, the kingdom will be ours.

During this time of expectation, we Christians are filled with a sometimes elusive joy and excitement. We need to concentrate on the things in life that really matter, to minimize the secular aspects of our preparation by centering our thoughts and activities on the coming of Jesus.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

(The community pauses in silence for several minutes to ponder the scriptures and the questions which follow.)

1. In this Advent season, how do you focus your energies and enthusiasm on the deeper reality of Christmas?
2. Mountains made low, valleys filled and rough places made smooth. What must you *make low*, *raise up* or *smooth out* in your life?
3. Anticipate: List a typical round of the seasonal activities in your life. Rank them. How can you reorder them? What can you eliminate from the bottom of your list to accomplish better the ones at the top?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

Suggestions:

1. Choose a family member or a friend from whom you have been estranged or related to in a *lukewarm* way. Decide how you are going to reach out, personally, with a note or a *thinking of you* card.
2. Bring the light of the anticipated Messiah to a family in crisis. Contact your parish social action committee for help in identifying a family you may support during this season.
3. Be attentive to seasonal tension this week among family members and co-workers. Intervene on behalf of peace.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The community stands and forms a circle.)

Leader: The preaching of John the Baptist calls us to renew our lives in the spirit of love, peace and justice for all. Let us respond to God's call:

All: Come, Lord Jesus.

Leader: That we may listen and hear the voice of John the Baptizer as we seek comfort and forgiveness:

All: Come, Lord Jesus.

Leader: That harshness and anger, wherever they exist in our families, may give way to forgiveness, love and peace:

All: Come, Lord Jesus.

Leader: That we may see all people as brothers and sisters, regardless of differences in race, creed, color, opinion or orientation:

All: Come, Lord Jesus.

Leader: That God's creative power may manifest itself in what we do and say:

All: Come, Lord Jesus.

Leader: May the peace and joy of Jesus' birth be with each of us:

All: Amen.

Leader: Let us share the peace of Jesus.