

My Dear people of God,

Welcome to the second Sunday of Advent! Yes, we are already entering the second week of this holy season and that means Christmas, the coming of the Messiah, the coming of the Savior is at hand. It is only two more weeks away! On this Sunday as well as the next, we are presented with the person of John the Baptist with his message on preparing for the coming of the Lord.

Reading today's gospel brought to my mind, a 1993 historic occasion in my native country Uganda. Pope John Paul II visited Uganda and literally all of everyday life came to a standstill for the duration of his visit. The landscape of the places he visited was also drastically affected, for the better. At the time, I was a college freshman (Makerere University) and as I now recall that event, the strongest memories I have are connected with the preparations that preceded the pope's visit. Special Masses, all-night vigils, prayer groups, were the order of the day. The last papal visit (which was also the first in Sub-Saharan Africa) was in 1969. There were four places in the country where the Pope would visit celebrate Eucharist, and address the crowds. These places were decorated, and made great strides in preparation for the visit. Dirt roads, were paved, buildings were erected and various amenities put in place for the visit by the holy father, his entourage and the crowds. Local communities were organized for mass transport to and from the various location. I myself was involved especially with the holy father's meeting with the youth at a sports stadium. The visit was a wonderful success, and a time of many and many graces for Uganda. I have never doubted that the preparation was a very vital part of the success of the Papal visit. More recently (2015), pope Francis also visited Uganda, this time around, I was now in Cajun country and so did not participate.

My dear brothers and sisters, my recollection above is about a visit by the vicar of Christ, the pope. How much more preparation should be made for the Lord Himself! During the Advent season, the Church invites all of us to prepare ourselves and to celebrate the coming of Jesus as our Lord, Savior and Redeemer. We must therefore heed that call, and prepare our hearts for this great occasion. In the gospel reading, we are called to straighten out our lives. To fill in the valleys, and to level the mountains and hills is about ensuring justice for all of God's people.

What exactly does repentance (turning from sin) mean? It means that if we are conscious of anything in our life that is in conflict with the Christian vocation; if we are aware of any pattern of behavior, relationship, or deceit in our life that is not according to the will of Jesus, then we must get rid of it. John the Baptist's time was very limited, just as the season of Advent is quite short. There is little time for procrastination. Today's gospel calls for action now. Surely we cannot presume on the number of Advents we still have left in our lives, can we? With the call to respond comes the grace needed to make the necessary changes.

What needs to be straightened in our lives?

*-may be we have not been truthful & honest in our dealings with others and with God*

What valleys need to be filled?

*-broken relationships: that person that was very close to you and has left a hole in your life?*

What needs to be leveled?

*-pride; we have raised ourselves and in so doing disregarded others*

What is rugged and needs to be made plain?

*- our words/speech*

Maranatha- Come Lord Jesus!

God bless,

Fr Simon Peter