

## **HOMILY FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT-DECEMBER 6**

**Advent: A time to deepen our desire for change.**

**READINGS: Isaiah 40: 1-5, 9-11;**

**Responsorial Psalm-Psalm 85;**

**2 Peter 3: 8-14;**

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

Recently there was an article in the Catholic Register with the title “Mary Centre paves path to independence”. The article was about Monica Maiato and her determination to become self-sufficient. When Maiato set her sights on the goal to live independently, she got support from the Mary Centre. The Mary Centre is a Toronto non-profit organization that supports and equips adults with developmental disabilities to live an independent life. It is an agency supported by ShareLife and the Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto. Through the programs of the Centre, Maiato has learned to cook, to take care of a home and to take the bus. Maiato has also learned skills of finances-- something she has been struggling with. The 29-year old Maiato says she’s gained the life skills and the confidence she needs to stand on her own feet. Now going on two years since embarking on that journey, Maiato’s life has been completely transformed to live a life of hope and peace.

On this Second Sunday of Advent, the three readings for the liturgy share one thing in common. They also talk about the transformation of lives. We begin our reflection with the first reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. Today’s passage is part of the Book of Isaiah written by the prophet known as “Deutero-Isaiah” or “Second Isaiah”, who lived during the time of the Babylonian exile. Today’s passage begins with these words, “Comfort, O comfort my people”-- setting a tone of comfort and hope to people who were in great pain. In exile the Israelites had lost hope that God was still with them. They felt dejected and rejected by God. The prophet assured the people that God would continue to be faithful to his promises of his covenantal relationship with the Israelites. The passage tells us that God has forgotten the transgressions of infidelity of his people. The faithful God would clear a path for the Israelites to return home. Yes, their return was made possible through the action of Cyrus, king of Persia who acted as God’s instrument to defeat the Babylonians. The return of the exiles to their homeland would be a new beginning that would transform their lives.

The story of the prophecy of Isaiah in the first reading leads us to the Gospel passage from Mark. Today’s passage is the beginning of the Gospel of Mark. We read: “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God”. We notice that Mark used the expression “Son of God” to describe Jesus. As compared with the other two synoptic Gospels-Matthew and Luke, the Gospel of Mark has no infancy narratives. These are stories about the birth of Jesus that the two Evangelists Matthew and Luke used to teach us that Jesus is the Son of God. Rather, Mark focuses on John the

Baptist-- a messenger sent by God to prepare the way of Jesus, the Son of God. The Evangelist Mark quotes from the Book of Second Isaiah, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight" to describe the mission of John the Baptist: Mark uses the expression "prepare the way of the Lord" in the same context used by Isaiah in the first reading. As God made the cleared the road for the return of the exiles, John the Baptist was clear the road for the coming of the Lord.

The description of the appearance of John the Baptist tells us about his austerity, seriousness and holiness: characteristics of a prophet. In fact, because of his appearance the people thought that John the Baptist was the expected Messiah. However, John the Baptist made it known that he was not the Messiah by referring to Jesus as "the one coming after me". John the Baptist used the expression "he would baptize with the Holy Spirit" to reveal the divinity of Jesus. The mission of John the Baptist was to bring people to repentance. He offered his people the opportunity to transform their lives so that they could prepare for the coming of the Lord.

In the second reading from the Second Letter of Peter, the writer discusses the theme of the coming of the Lord. The Second Letter of Peter is considered by scripture scholars to be the last of the New Testament Letters to be written. The scholars believe the Letter dates to the end of the first century and that it was not written by the Apostle Peter but by one of the elders of the early Church. The writer and his contemporaries believed that the Second Coming of Jesus was imminent. However, two generations had come and gone since Jesus had left, and so the early Christians had started to question about the delay of the Second Coming. The writer reminded the early Christians that their understanding of time was not the same as God's. He warned them not to be complacent in the way they lived but to conduct themselves as people waiting to meet Christ.

Last week, when we began the Season of Advent, the readings of the liturgy called us to be awake and to be ready for the coming of Christ. Today as we light the second candle on the Advent wreath, what do the three readings tell us about our preparation as we enter the Second Week of Advent? Today's readings invite us to reflect on how to live as people waiting for the coming of the Lord at Christmas. As we continue on our Advent journey, are we still on our path preparing for Christmas? Perhaps the story about Maiato that I shared with you earlier might give us some insight to answer this question.

The article mentioned that Maiato's transformation was made possible due to her desire to change her life. She was determined to commit herself to follow the program offered at the Mary Centre. The paper reported that through the job skills training at the Centre, Maiato landed a job at Legoland in December 2019. The article also shared with us some of the challenges that Maiato encountered in her life. In 2009, she lost her mother and she had to live with some family members who moved from one place to another. Yet, she remained focus on her commitment to

change her life. She was reported as saying that the transformation has helped her become a better version of herself.

The Season of Advent is the time for us to renew our desire for a new beginning and a time to renew our commitment to change our ways. Advent is the time for us to examine our attitude to change our ways and to develop an attitude similar to that of Maiato. Advent is the time for us to embrace the spirit of transformation into our lives. This year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we may be experiencing that our celebration of Advent is different from the past. Yet, this is the time to allow ourselves to be led by the Spirit of love, to teach us to be more caring, understanding, compassionate to each other. As we continue on our Advent journey, let us ask to God to deepen our desire to change our ways, so that we can come together as people of hope and love.

**Fr. Yaw Acheampong**

(Please note: Homily was prepared for a congregation at a distance)