

## **Second Sunday of Advent**

When we encounter road works, we often get a bit annoyed that we have to reduce our speed or wait for a while to give way to oncoming traffic. But none of us complains once the road work is done and we can drive safely on a new stretch of road. There is not much road repair work going on around Mount Barker at the moment but a lot of road making as new housing estates are established. We can forget how important the road makers are in our community

On this Second Sunday of Advent the good news is about a road maker called John, the son of Zechariah. John comes back to us each Advent about the same time as the little corellas come to visit us. Both make quite a noise, but the corellas stay much longer than John does. In a very dramatic way Luke zeros in on a moment of history when the Word of God came to this man John and made him into God's prophet. Luke tells us that it was in the fifteenth year of the reign of the emperor Tiberius, and Pontius Pilate, Herod Antipas, Philip and Lysanias were governing the lands around where this happened. Annas and Caiaphas were the High Priests in Jerusalem. I saw these first verses of today's gospel described as a chronological drumroll. All this information helps us to appreciate that this moment was a pivotal moment in the history of our world and that

what John was called to say in God's name was a message for the whole world to hear.

All that detail can help us to understand that at each moment of our lives the Word of God comes to us too and calls us to live and to speak in the name of our God. In some way we are all prophets. We are moved by God to make God known by the way that we live in union with him. Pope Francis often talks about this. In his Apostolic Exaltation Gaudete et Exultate he wrote, "Let us be spurred on by the signs of holiness that the Lord shows us through the humblest members of that people which 'shares also in Christ's prophetic office, spreading abroad a living witness to him, especially by means of a life of faith and charity'" He then quotes Edith Stein, St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. "The greatest figures of prophecy and sanctity step forth out of the darkest night. Certainly the most decisive turning points in world history are substantially co-determined by souls whom no history book ever mentions."

John was called step out from the darkest night and to be the voice that cries in the wilderness, "Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley will be filled in, every mountain and hill laid low." That imagery comes from the idea of ancient peoples making roads for their king to travel upon. If they knew that the king was to come to them they would get out their road

making equipment and make sure that all the potholes would be filled in and the rough parts made smooth. It is the sort of thing that we still do for royal visitors.

It is an image that we see used in our first reading today from Baruch. In the reading from Baruch God is the road maker. He makes the road so that the people of Israel can walk in safety under the glory of God. God will guide the people of Israel “in joy by the light of his glory with his mercy and integrity for escort”.

But once a road is made it can be used by people going in both directions. We usually think of ourselves travelling on a road to meet the Lord. But the Advent road allows the Lord to travel to us, to come to us, to meet us where we are. And we don't have to do all the road building. Jesus invites us to let him make the road straighter and smoother for us. We probably don't have to do much more than admit that the Advent road is in need of repair. Once we have admitted that there are some things in our lives that prevent the Lord from making his way to us easily, then the road works can begin. Once we have seen the things that need to be changed in our lives then the Lord is ready to work with us and make those changes.

Today's reading from St. Paul's letter to the Philippians can give us much encouragement. What he says to that

community we can hear him saying to us. “I am quite certain that the One who began this good work in you will see that it is finished when the Day of Christ Jesus comes. My prayer is that your love for each other may increase more and more and never stop improving your knowledge and deepening your perception so that you can always recognise what is best.”

When we listen to St. Paul we can appreciate that the work of being a disciple of Jesus is an ongoing work. And it is God's work going on all the time within us. St. Paul tells us that we are being prepared for the Day of Christ when we will reach the perfect goodness which Jesus Christ produces in us for the glory and praise of God.

Today we have lit the second of our Advent candles. We lit the first candle to make sure that the Lord could see where we are and so make his way along the Advent road to find us. We lit the second candle to give us enough light to make our way towards him. That light can help us to see where the road still needs repair. Let's invite him to make that road one that we can both walk easily along.