

Homily 2nd Sunday of Advent B

This Sunday's Theme: Salvation and New Beginnings from God . New Beginnings: Isaiah (Reading 1) announces a new beginning for the exiles. Peter (Reading 2) speaks about a new creation for those awaiting the Lord's return. Mark (Gospel) introduces John the Baptist who promises a new beginning to all who repent. We need to pray: Lord, make us abandon the old paths, teach us to prepare for you a new way."Those that aim at holiness constantly look into sacred writings to examine their lives, to scrutinize their deeds. In addition, if they find anything reprehensible, inordinate, or out of keeping with their state, they at once use every effort to amend and set it right, according to the light they have received." (St. Augustine)

God invites us to reflect and examine our conscience to see the place of God in our life. Reflection helps us learn from our mistakes. If we don't reflect on our mistakes, we are doomed to repeat them. And that's not very smart. However, if we reflect on those mistakes, figure out what went wrong, see how we can prevent them in the future, we can use our mistakes to get better. Only reflection can lead us to repentance and repentance which would eventually lead us to new beginnings. It is not a call for sentimentality about the child in the manger, it a radical call to change and that is never easy. That is why Advent is such an appropriate time to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation. There we encounter the all-embracing love of God who never ceases to offer us new life and hope and who empowers us to be his instruments for change in a world torn apart. We are a forgiven and comforted people and we welcome the forgiveness and comfort of God in our repentance. This means we are firstly grateful for forgiveness, that we do not have to carry forever the burden of sin, meanness and our faults and failings. God covers them over in mercy. The second step of welcoming forgiveness is to try to do better in life – to move on from this sinfulness and meanness to a life of care, compassion, love and joy. It is a call and a challenge to forgive others. Advent is not complete without some admission of sin and our need for mercy. When we receive the grace of conversion we see things in a new way and our actions follow. Our actions follow our way of seeing things. If we get the grace of repentance or conversion and feel the call to a deeper and more intimate relationship or friendship with Jesus then we will see things in a new way and because of this our actions will change. The way we talk, walk, relate with others and carry our duties: all be in a dignified way. Otherwise we have negative echoes for us, suggesting an overbearing will to dominate over others.

There was a young boy who came regularly to soccer practice, but never made it to the starting team. While he was practicing, his father would sit at the far end of the field, waiting for him. The matches began and for four days, the boy didn't show up for practice or the quarter or semi-finals. He appeared for the final game, went to the coach and said, "Sir, you have always kept me in the reserves and never let me play in the games. But today, please let me play." The coach said, "Son, I'm sorry, I can't let you. There are better players than you, and besides it is the final. I can't take chance on you." The boy's persistent pleading made the coach change his mind and give him a chance. The game started and the boy played like a house on fire. Every time he got the ball, he shot a goal. His team had a spectacular victory. When the game finished the coach asked him, "I have never seen you play like this before, how did you do so well? The boy replied, "My father is watching me today. The coach said, "But, your father didn't come today. I don't see him. The boy told him, "There is something I never told you. My father was blind. He died four days ago. Today is the first day he is watching me from above'. Always remember that there is someone who is watching us from above. Therefore, we have to turn away from evil by levelling the mountains of ego, and filling the valleys with the precepts of the Lord. Let us have a new beginning.