

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent  
December 5, 2021  
“From Divisiveness to Unity in Love”

Bar 5:1-9  
Phil 1:4...11  
Lk 3:1-6

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

The Covid Virus and its variants have certainly changed our lives and changed the direction of what would have been our future. Furthermore, it has erected new barriers and established divisions where they did not exist before.

There have always been national and international divisions – Some people have always been divided politically and socio-economically – There have always been religious believers and non-believers – But now we have vaxxers and anti-vaxxers – And, in many cases, they are openly hostile to one another!

Sadly, many people feel more estranged and isolated now, than they ever were before. We can actually feel that we are exiled from what life should be for us! Fortunately, the scriptures for today show us a way through this malaise. They also provide us with hope for the future and for the here and now.

The prophet Baruch wrote for the exiles in Babylon, Assyria, and wherever else they had been scattered. He told them that no matter how bad things got, they were not to lose faith or hope. God had not abandoned them. Yes, they had to suffer for their past sinfulness – Yes, their hearts, minds, and spirits had to be purged of all their waywardness – Nevertheless, somehow, some day, they would reclaim their heritage as the Chosen People of God. Moreover, God would remove every barrier that impeded them and separated them from Him and from one another!

Christians have always known that Jesus is the one God sent to inaugurate the fulfillment of this plan. In the Gospel selection, John the Baptist proclaims what must take place in the human heart and soul. We must truly change to be receptive of Jesus and his message.

The salvation that Jesus brings is not from the hardships of life. It is not from what divides and alienates nations and political parties. The salvation that Jesus brings is from the darkness in our hearts. It is from sin and the power of sin over us. However, we must, first, recognize it, accept it, and believe in Jesus who brings it. Pontius Pilate, Herod and his brothers, Caesar himself, could never accept Jesus. The majority of the contemporaries of Jesus, and their religious leadership, could not accept him.

Jesus disrupted the status quo. He made what seemed to be impossible demands, and required faith and trust. People would have to change their lives: their habits, their lifestyle, their attitudes, their close-mindedness, and their hardheartedness. And most of them failed!

But true disciples did not fail! These were those who believed, trusted, and changed their hearts and lives. They became the Christian Community – actually, the new People of God – that has spread throughout the world!

As authentic Christians, true disciples don't let anything divide them in hearts and spirits. They might disagree on any number of issues – But they never forget their solidarity in Jesus. Because Jesus unites them to himself and to each other as well.

Today, St. Paul reminds us of this. He teaches that God is always working in each of us individually and as a community of disciples. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are always there for us wherever we are – no matter how disruptive the world is around us.

Brothers and Sisters, love always unites. God is love – And as He brings us love, so must we spread that love all around us. In fact, love is something that increases in us, the more that we give it away.

So, let us continue preparing for the celebration of the Savior's Birth – Let us do what is still undone in our hearts and lives – Let us pray and work to end divisiveness. May we level the hills and fill the valleys of our resistance – And may we let nothing impede the life of Jesus and the love of God in our hearts and lives!

Amen.

December 5, 2021

Msgr. Russell G. Terra