

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT; Cycle – C; Dec. 8th 2024
Baruch 5:1-9; Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11; Luke 3: 1-6

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

If we go back to the Salvation History we come to know how the Word of God acted in different individuals, starting from Abraham down to the Prophets. Once they accepted the Word of God, they never remained the same person as they were before. They became powerful instruments in the hands of God.

In today's gospel we find the turning point in the life of John the Baptist who accepted the Word. We read in the gospel, **“The word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert. John went throughout the whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Luke 3:2-3).** During the Advent Season on the second and third Sundays we are warned by John the Baptist who invites us for a *total transformation or conversion*. John knew that the people of Israel had gone too far from the true God and repeatedly they remained unfaithful to Him and His Word.

In the Promised Land the Word of God came down upon the Prophets and they preached to the people; but Israel didn't accept the Word and as a result they perished. When they wandered in the desert, they felt the hands of God upon them and they were rather faithful to God, though there were occasional murmurings against Moses and some undue incidents. So John the Baptist knew that the only possible way to bring them back to listen to the Word of God was to take them back to the desert experience, where their ancestors listened to the Word of God. **That is why the Word of God came to John in the desert.**

The ultimate role of the Baptist was to bring the people back to the Word Incarnate, Jesus Christ. If we go through the mission of John, we know that he could convert a lot of people and a few hearts were prepared to accept the Messiah. Finally, the Word of God itself incarnated in the history in the person of Jesus Christ. St. John begins his gospel with the story of the *‘Word’* and very poetically he writes about the incarnation of the Word of God. He says, **“And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).** But how effective was the Word among people? St. John laments in his gospel, **“He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him” (Jn 1:11).** In other words, during the life time of Jesus, the Word of God didn't do big impact on people. But things were changed by the descent of the Holy Spirit

upon the apostles. When we read the early history of the Church in the Acts of the Apostles, we are amazed by the power of the Word of God which came out through the mouths of the Apostles. We read in the Acts of the Apostles, **“But many of those who heard the Word came to believe and the number of men grew to about five thousand.”**

As believers, we have been listening to the Word of God for years. On every Sunday we hear the Word of God and many of us read the Word; but what impact does it make in us? Why doesn't the Word transform us? In order to get the answer we have to go back to the life of John the Baptist and see as how the Word of God became effective in him. **First of all John went into the desert and there the Word of God came to him and then he proclaimed the Word.** In order to listen to the Word, like John we have to go to the *'desert' all alone, which* need not be a physical desert. In other words, we have to take off from our busy schedule and the cares of the material world and there we have to spend time with Lord in solitude; no doubt, then we will be able to hear the Word of God there. Secondly when the Word of God comes to us, we should not remain passive to it rather we should open our hearts towards it as John the Baptist did. He accepted the Word wholeheartedly and preached it to the people.

Our attitude towards the Word of God should be that of Prophet Samuel who responded to God when he heard the Word of God: **“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening” (1 Samuel 3:9).** This was the attitude of all the holy men and women, including our Blessed Mother. Once we have this experience of the touch of the Word, we will find time to pray and read the Word of God daily. The more we read the more it will touch us and create the fire in us to listen to the Word of God. Then in the third step, like John the Baptist, we will be called to bear witness to the Word and proclaim it. It is indeed, the Word of God that converted great men like Paul, Augustine and Francis Xavier. In the letter to the Hebrews the author says: ***“Indeed the Word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit” (Heb. 4:12).*** The Word is still effective provided we accept it and act upon it. It will break any walls and barriers in our lives. In the Book of Jeremiah we read, **“Is not my Word like fire, says the Lord, like a hammer shattering rocks?”(Jeremiah 23:29).**