**2nd Sunday of Advent – Cycle C**

December 8/9, 2012

Baruch 5: 1-9; Phil 1:4, 8-11; Lk 3: 1-6

***God comes to us. Will we go to him?***

Imagine two scenarios and two different voices. First, I’d like you to think of the voice of the oddest member in your family, maybe your uncle or cousin. Imagine that family member being gone for a few years and then all of a sudden returning looking pretty ragged and out-of-sorts, speaking directly to you and going on and on about God coming soon and how we all have to repent and get ready.

Now, imagine another scenario and another kind of voice,. You are walking through a mountain range. Big tall mountains that seem to speak to you with their size and beauty, and the deep valleys that repeat back to you every word you speak. This voice seems to pull you farther and farther into the mountains, mesmerizing you by their grandeur and beauty, only to find that you are lost and can’t find your way back home because the mountains block your exit and the valleys are too deep to escape.

Now, my question is to which of these two voices will you listen to in your life? Is it the call of the mountains of resistance and the echoes of the deep valleys of temptation? Or, will you listen to the words of John the Baptist in the Gospel? The word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness; and he went into the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Make ready the way of the Lord! Clear him a straight path! Let every valley be filled, every mountain made low! Let all mankind see the salvation of our God, for he comes! Smooth out the rough patches John said, and straighten the crookedness of your life. Fill in what is missing!

God wants to make our lives smooth. He wants to remove the mountains of distress in our lives and he wants to fill our valleys of despair with his presence, with his peace, with his justice, with his glory. Yes God comes to us! He comes so that we might not be held captive by sin and death. He comes so that we might be free from all that would tear us away from him. God comes to seeking us out.

God comes to level our mountains of resistance. He comes to fill the trenches of temptation. God comes to strengthen our hands and make firm our knees, so that we might stand tall upon the heights and declare before all the people, “The Lord has done great things for us! We are glad indeed!”

Yes, return to the Lord with all your heart. Go to him. Ready yourself, for Jesus is coming! He will complete in us the good work, the good news, which he began so long ago.

Ask yourselves, “What are the valleys of temptation in my life? Where are the mountains of resistance that impede my progress? What has led me away from my God?”

My friends, John the Baptist outlines three steps we must take to find our way out of those mountains and the valleys of life.

Step one: we must go into the wilderness, into the desert, into those mountains and valleys. We must find time to be with God. We must find time to pray. In the wilderness we must struggle to admit our sinfulness and our need of forgiveness. We must admit we are lost and in need of guidance and direction.

Step two, we must let the God come to us and lead us out. God comes to us when we pray. God comes to us when we read Scripture and hear it read. Yes, God wants us to seek him out by going into the desert, but he also wants to lead us out of that wilderness; he wants to free us from whatever holds us captive. He wants to give us his Spirit who guides us out of the mountains and valleys that surround us. He comes to give us the hope of rebirth! On his own initiative, God comes searching our souls, searching our hearts that have been held captive by the addiction of sin and the temptations of the world around us.

Yes, God comes to forgive us. When does that forgiveness come to us in a very personal way? When we go to confession and receive absolution. We all need to confess our sins, admit our guilt and receive the Lord’s forgiveness. We must go frequently, on a monthly basis, to the sacrament of Penance. It is our way of being prepared for his coming. It is our way to ready ourselves for the coming of Jesus.

Step three, we must go out and proclaim the faith. He sends us out to announce to the whole world that God is good and that he has done great things for us. He sends us out in joy and peace so we might give witness to his presence and his love, so that we might lead others to him. He sends us out so that others may learn the faith, and know God. He sends us out to proclaim the truth that God is found in the Catholic Church, in her teachings, in her living Tradition and Apostolic ministry.

In a nutshell, Advent is a time to go into the wilderness in order to listen and hear God’s voice, to be open to his coming into our lives, to seek his forgiveness, and then to become witnesses of his coming into our world.

God will lead us. He will level the mountains of sin and fills the trenches of temptation. He will bring to completion the work he has begun. He will grace us with his presence. Look for him! He is coming soon! Go to him! As the Scriptures say, “Let all mankind will see the salvation of God!”

***God comes to you. Will you go to him?***