

Baruch 5.1-9

This passage can be seen as a parable of redemption and reconciliation with God. For Jerusalem read any human being. The garment of sorrow and affliction can be seen as sin and wrongdoing. There is, in the rite of baptism, a specific renunciation of evil and sin, if you like, 'a taking off of the garment of sorrow and affliction.' The white robes worn by the newly baptized are a sign of putting on Christ who is the robe of righteousness and who wears the diadem of the glory everlasting. Furthermore the crown that Jerusalem is told to put on has inscribed upon it the sacred name. This is the privilege in Christianity of being an adopted son or a daughter of God in Jesus Christ, signified in baptism by the naming of the child or adult. But this giving of a name means also the conferring of the attributes of righteous peace and Godly Glory. Thus in Baptism it is not simply a matter of renouncing evil but receiving the Holy Spirit who gives us the character gifts of love, joy, peace, honesty and courage, to name but a few, so that we may be truly human, restored in the image of God to our original destiny. The rest of the passage speaks of a time of restoration when all the peoples of the world, the children of God, will find their true home in Jerusalem, and will be restored and renewed in the image of God as has been described. Hence this passage can be seen as an expression of what the coming of Christ at the end of time will be like and a definition of the Advent Hope.

Saints & Heroes

The Immaculate Conception

Even well-catechized Christians often get confused about yesterday's solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, thinking that 'conception' refers to Jesus being conceived in the womb of his mother, the Virgin Mary. Instead, the 'Immaculate Conception' is a title used to describe the conception of the Virgin Mary herself, in the womb of her mother, St Anne: it was Mary who was conceived 'immaculately'. Indeed, in this feast we celebrate that great and unique privilege by which Mary was preserved from original sin, which is otherwise common to the human race – she was preserved from sin right from that first moment of her life. In Mary, God therefore did for the second Eve what he had done for the first. This time, however, he did it in order that eventually Mary might bear within herself the author of her salvation, Our Lord Jesus Christ. So recalling the celebration of yesterday's feast, give thanks for the role of Mary, Jesus' mother and ours, without whom our own salvation would simply not have happened.



9th December
2018 Second Sunday of
Advent

Forgiveness



Today St Luke introduces us to John the Baptist, a voice who cries out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord!' John's message, and his baptism, is one hinged on a message of forgiveness. This implies there is something to be forgiven, and it implies there is one who forgives. In his ministry, the Baptist is therefore starting to turn hearts and minds once again to God, to help those at the time, and us in our turn, understand that we are fallen human beings in need of a Saviour. Jesus is on his way – even the earth is being prepared with the mountains and hills being made low and the winding ways being straightened – but the question remains: will our hearts be willing to accept his message? Do we acknowledge we need God's forgiveness, do we acknowledge our sin? If so, then we will much more easily recognise that Jesus is no ordinary human being, but the one who saves. This Advent, why not make use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, or Confession, to prepare for the coming of Jesus at Christmas?

From the Fathers

The river of time sweeps on, but there, like a tree planted by the water, is our Lord Jesus Christ. He became human, willing to plant himself by the river of time. If you feel yourself drifting down to the rapids, lay hold of the tree, if you are caught up in the love of the world, hold on to Christ. He, for your sake, entered into time, but he did not cease to be eternal.

From 'Homilies on I John' by St Augustine of Hippo (354-430, bishop, theologian)