

Fr. Rudy's Reflections
Second Sunday of Advent
December 10, 2023

Let There Be Peace on Earth and Let It Begin *with Me!*

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

As we light the second candle of our Advent wreath today, we recognize we are living in hostile, turbulent times beset by violence, hatred, retribution, tension, and war among us. The idea of peace, our Advent theme today, seems remote and unattainable. The world seems to be spinning out of control, and many of us feel a true sense of trepidation about what is to come. Can we, as individuals, do anything of substance about these uncertain days? Yes, armed with our faith, God's grace, and our magnanimous spirit of love, I believe we can.

It is the Second Sunday of Advent, and our Gospel today centers around the first verses of the Gospel of Mark, companion and interpreter of Peter, who is believed to be the first author of our four Gospels, completing his compilation of Jesus's life and ministry in Rome about 70 A.D. This Gospel's opening lines: "[t]he *beginning* of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" provide us with an absolute statement that *Jesus's life was and is a true beginning for us*—the coming of the Prince of Peace—who can drive away the horrors of this world and give us grace for salvation. Because this first verse does not contain a verb, it implies the title for the Gospel of Mark—that these words will be the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The forerunner of this time in history is John the Baptist who lights the way for the ministry of Jesus Christ. John is the signaler to the bridge of faith connecting the promises of the Old Testament to its fulfillment in the New Testament. John used the powerful symbol of baptism as a means to cleanse lives from sin and replace them with repentance to "prepare the way of the Lord and make his paths straight." Throughout his life, John tried to ensure that people were ready for the coming of the Messiah who would baptize them, not in an immersion in a river but by the waters of the Holy Spirit.

In the midst of the devastation and despair of that time, and as it is today, we hear the Good News in our Gospels that God is here, God is victorious, and God will reign forever. God calls us to be with him, to find peace in his arms. God brings hope to those who are suffering, struggling, and unsure of their pathways. According to St. John Paul II, "We should be converted to peace, we should be converted to Christ, our peace, certain that His disarming love in the crib overcomes every dire threat and plan for violence. . .that the enormous energy of His peace [will] drive out the hatred and revenge that lurk in the human soul."

To this end, it is prayer and kindness toward our fellow human, fervent and steady, we must seek, especially as we prepare for this greatest of blessings in the weeks to come. Prayer is our mainstay, and the way we love—outwardly, unselfishly, and with open hearts—is the way we can achieve a more tranquil heart and help light the world in peace.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy