

# A Bible Bullet (aimed at the heart)

Second Sunday of Advent, Cycle C

Baruch 5:1-9; Philippians 1:4-6,8-11; Luke 3:1-6

The prophet Baruch calls us, as he called the descendants of the Jews exiled to Babylon. He wants us to know that the way back to God can be made clear and easy to travel, but it will require a decision to turn our backs on the way of life we have come to know.

In the prophetic writing of the Book of Baruch, Jerusalem is portrayed as a loving, hopeful mother who longs for the return of her children from exile. They will return rejoicing for they have been remembered by God in spite of their past sins. Glory and justice will be God's gifts to them. Everything that stands in the way of their return, they are to expect will be cleared.

Every lofty mountain will be made low.  
Every gorge and ravine will be filled.  
Forests and fragrant trees will provide shade from the sun.  
Not only will the exiled return without obstacle,  
They will return in the presence of God for He will lead them.

The message of hope is very similar to the message delivered centuries earlier by Isaiah (40:3-5) and quoted by Luke in Sunday's reading:

A Herald's voice in the desert crying  
'Make ready the way of the Lord,  
Clear him a straight path.'  
Every valley shall be filled  
And every mountain and hill shall be leveled.  
The windings shall be made straight  
And the rough ways smooth,  
And all mankind shall see the salvation of God.

Perhaps we are being asked to question who or what leads us and to where we are headed. Mother Jerusalem awaits the return of her children but they have grown used to life in Babylon. Many of them are second and third generation of the original exiles. They don't know Jerusalem. They followed the ways of those around them. What would draw them home again? Cyrus of Persia has set them free to return, but many choose to remain where they are.

Advent is a time to make a home for the Lord's coming. The way to make this

happen is known only by our hearts. If we stop long enough to consider the obstacles in our way, we may actually see the mountains and ravines that need to be leveled. This will not be easy.

Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, offers a prayer for us as we gather the faith necessary to ready ourselves:

*My prayer is that your love may more and more abound, both in understanding and wealth of experience, so that with a clear conscience and blameless conduct you may learn to value the things that really matter, up to the very day of Christ.*