

Second Sunday of Advent 2020

My beloved brothers and sister, there is no doubt that we are now living in a time of tremendous turmoil in the world and in our nation and also in our Church. Sometimes we can be so narrowly focused on the turmoil and chaos that is raging around us that we begin to think that this is the worst of times; however, if we take history seriously, this is just one more time of turmoil amongst many. We often forget, that God, in His Divine Wisdom, allows these times in history to call His people to a profound repentance. That was the case with John the Baptist's time, as well as our own time. Salvation history, from the time of the fall of man to the time of the Incarnation of Christ, has been a long, difficult and twisted road. It is hard to walk when you have been blinded by sin filled the road with obstacles!

The time of St. John was also fraught with turmoil, political, and religious. The people of that time were also looking for answers. In Isaiah, God had promised His people that in their struggle and difficulties, God would come to dwell with His people; however, God's call to His people was to make smooth the road, filling in the rough spots, levelling the obstacles, and making a straight highway for God's coming to them. This was the message of St. John, and what he said to the people of his time, he says to us today. You see, we are the cause of our turmoil and the cause of chaos, and God wants to be with us; however, we must open the door to our hearts and smooth out the ways into our lives for Him!

St. Paul reminds us that God does not want our destruction, He wants our repentance, because He has created us for His infinite love and mercy; however, it is our decision to remove the obstacles from our lives that prevent us from opening to the Grace of Mercy and Forgiveness so that He can dwell within us and among us! St. John tells us the way: it is the way of repentance for the forgiveness of our sins that is the cure for turmoil and chaos! John's message is not just an attitude of repentance, it is not enough to know the mess we are in!

There are three parts to true repentance: First, we must pray for the Grace and accept the Grace of recognizing our sins. Our society no longer recognizes sin. Everything sinful is now, just a mistake. We even here this from murderers: "I

made a mistake.” Everything is psychologized away or excused away or rationalized away. Ask God for the Grace to see your sins as He sees them, so that you can truly repent from them. This is the second part: a true sorrow for my sins. It means recognizing the profound damage I have done to my relationship with God, my relationship with you and myself! I have contributed to the sickness of the world by my sins! The third part of repentance, is to return to God with my whole heart mind and soul, to radically depend up Him and His Divine will for me, to straighten out the roads into my life by living His way, and not my way, so He can enter in.

For the last couple of weeks I have been using the image from the Book of Revelation of the 24 Elders, who get off of their thrones before the Holy One of God, bow down before Him with their faces to the ground, and cast their crowns into the dirt before Him. How can God enthrone Himself into our lives, if we insist upon occupying HIS rightful place?