

December 9, 2012 – Second Sunday of Advent
Prepared by Fr. Daniel McLaughlin, MM, São Paulo, Brazil

Baruch 5:1-9; Psalms 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6; Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11; Luke 3:1-6

Whether it within the Eucharistic celebrations on Sundays or in gatherings of 6-7 families in private homes during the Advent season, Brazilians see this time of year as a time to prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ. As they reflect together they articulate a clear understanding that salvation is a gift from God and is not something that can be granted by the “official line” – those in power who dominate and oppress.

In the first part of today’s gospel, Luke makes a stark contrast between those who were the political authorities at the time of Christ’s birth and those who were in power. In Luke, chapter 3: 4-5 we are introduced to John the Baptist who presents an alternative plan, a plan that was first presented by Isaiah in Isaiah 40: 3-5. This alternative plan revealed by Isaiah and John the Baptist, demands of us who call ourselves Christian, to prepare the coming of the Savior, by making straight the way of the Lord, and filling in the holes and taking out the curves in the road.

Recently, as the mayoral elections were just beginning, members of the Archdiocese of São Paulo’s Faith and Politics Pastoral planned a way that they could make these words of John the Baptist real for their current reality. After months of reflecting, the Pastoral developed a plan to help those in authority -- in this case those seeking to become mayor -- become more aware that Christ’s coming is for the salvation for all.

They invited the mayoral candidates to come and listen to the proposals that the Pastoral created. Each of the proposals they outlined around health, education, public transportation, violence, housing and the environment were steps the mayor could take to make the words of Isaiah and John come alive in this area of São Paulo. They were proposals that truly would help to make straight the way of the Lord – leveling the mountains and smoothing the rough ways.

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

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