

Second Sunday of Advent (A)
You are that justice and hope of God!

Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-2,7-8,12-13,17; Romans 15:4-9; Matthew 3:1-12

Dear brother and sister in Christ,

Greetings to you through the words of the Responsorial Psalm,
"Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace forever" (Ps. 72).

This psalm echoes the promise of the Prophet Isaiah. He prophesied, "A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and his roots, a bud shall blossom" (Isaiah 11:1). It is a proclamation of hope amid the turmoil of Israel, especially the northern kingdom, where only two kings, Hezekiah and Josiah, have risen as nobles since King David, and both died young.

Isaiah prophesied that new life would grow from the dead stump, bringing salvation to all. He foretold the birth of a new king, upon whom the Spirit of the Lord will rest, wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, and fear of the Lord. He will not judge by appearances or hearsay but will judge the poor fairly and make just decisions for the oppressed (cf. Isa. 11:2-4).

Who among us has not yearned for the hope of a new dawn after a night of turmoil? Who wouldn't dream of what the psalmist and Prophet Isaiah declare?

Jesus fulfills the psalm's proclamation and the hope of the Prophet Isaiah. He embodies God's justice and peace. We are justified through His mercy, passion, and death. Peace is granted to us through His resurrection. Anyone who accepts and surrenders to Him, the way, the truth, and the life, will experience true peace. Peace is not the absence of problems but comes from God's constant presence.

When we learn and follow the way, truth, and life of our Lord Jesus, we reflect God's justice and peace. The question we must ask: are we living in accordance with God's justice and peace? Am I the embodiment of God's justice or the cause of injustice? Am I the bearer of God's peace or the source of trouble?

As we enter the second week of Advent, we hear the voice of God's messenger of justice and peace, St. John the Baptist. His voice breaks the silence of the desert, crying out: "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." Prepare the way of the Lord! (Matt. 3:2, 3).

These are not the greetings we usually hear this season or see on Christmas cards. These are not gentle words; they are meant to shake and challenge us. It is a sacred disturbance, like the blast of a trumpet.

Let us take a moment to be disturbed by his words. They serve as a wake-up call and an urgent summons to action because we cannot embody God's true justice and peace if we do not recognize our need for renewal. His call to repentance awakens this need. It involves honest, often painful, soul-searching, which only God's grace can bring about, producing the fruit of repentance.

Now is the time to change. Tomorrow may be too late. TNT: Today, Not Tomorrow. His call for repentance reminds us: if you plan to make a Christmas confession, do it soon and do not delay. St. Augustine said, "God has promised forgiveness to your repentance, but He has not promised tomorrow to your procrastination." If you are considering reconciling with someone, do it now and do not wait. It is like wet cement; once it dries, it is hard to undo. Imagine two futures. In one, you act

today and feel the peace and fulfillment of doing what is right. In the other, hesitation leads to regret as opportunities slip away, leaving the heart heavy with unspoken words and unfinished deeds. If you wonder whether to do something beautiful and holy for someone, do it now and do not wait until tomorrow, because tomorrow may never come. If you are thinking about fasting a little and praying more, do it now and do not wait until tomorrow. St. John Bosco once said, "Do not put off till tomorrow the good you can do today. You may not have a tomorrow."

Why wait for a special occasion to take a risk? Do it now before the opportunity slips away and may never come back. The Kingdom of God breaks in right now, this very moment. Seize it before it disappears forever. So, why wait or delay reaching out to call, write, encourage, or invite a friend or relative we haven't seen or spoken to in a long time? If we wait for the perfect moment, one of us might pass away before it happens. Why wait until the New Year to start shedding bad habits like excessive smoking or drinking, cursing, gossiping, dishonesty, or untruthfulness? If we wait that long, even the desire to change might fade.

As a simple micro-challenge, take a moment now to send a straightforward text or message to someone you've been meaning to reconcile with. A small gesture can bridge the gap and rekindle connections. Doing this takes just five minutes but can have a deeply positive effect on both their life and yours.

St. Paul, in our second reading, offers a similar encouragement. His words serve as meaningful prayers for us: "May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think in harmony with one another, in keeping with Christ Jesus, that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Rom 15:5-6).

Now is the time, not tomorrow, to welcome Christ Jesus into our lives through small, meaningful acts of goodness today, making a real difference in others' lives right now. Now is the time, not tomorrow, to become more Christ-like by cultivating greater love, care, and responsibility within us.

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Fr. Manny Hewe
Pastor