

Dec 7th .2008, ADVENT II Sunday Homily: Fr.Francis Chirackal CMI, MSW

(IS 40:1-5, 9-11; 2 PET 3:8-14; MK 1:1-8)

Repent & Clear the way of The Lord



In December 1903, after many attempts, the Wright brothers were successful in getting their "flying machine" off the ground. Thrilled, they telegraphed this message to their sister Katherine: "We have actually flown 120 feet. Will be home for Christmas." Katherine hurried to the editor of the local newspaper and showed him the message. He glanced at it and said, "How nice. The boys will be home for Christmas." He totally missed the big news--man had flown! Some times some of us may be thrilled at the gifts, food and festivities of the holiday season, ignoring the fact that **Christ's birth is the true reason** for this "holiday season" and that these are **HOLY DAYS** intended to give Jesus a **homecoming** by bringing **Him into our daily lives**.

All the three readings focus on the absolute necessity of readying ourselves by contrition and penance for Christ's coming. In the Gospel John the Baptist speaks of **ONE, Jesus Christ**, more powerful than he, who will baptize us with the Holy Spirit. The essence of his message was, '**repent and return to the ways of the Lord.**' John gives the Jews some down-to-earth advice as to how to change their lives for the better. He wants them and us as well to fill in valleys of prejudice, level the mountains of pride and straighten out the crooked paths of injustice. Preparing a way for God demands our listening to what God is saying to us and then making changes in our behavior. Welcoming God also involves removing all blockages and obstacles which prevent God from coming close to us.

John was convinced of the truth that even the chosen people needed true repentance and renewal of life to receive messiah. We must make confession to God because it is when a man says, "**I have sinned,**" that God gets the chance to say, "**I forgive.**"

John's message calls us also to confront and confess our sins; to turn away from them in sincere repentance; to receive God's forgiveness; and most importantly, to look to Jesus. **Do we need to receive God's forgiveness?** Precepts of the Catholic Church have made it obligatory to every Catholic believer to confess serious sins at least once a year. Some of us may be having a wrong impression that penance service will substitute the Sacrament of confession without confessing the sins to a priest. But it will not. We are absolved from our sins only when we **confess our sins to a priest** and in the name of God he gives absolution for the sins. Neglecting the Sacrament of confession is a sign of neglecting our Catholic faith. In today's homily printout there are a few pages on confession and penance. Please go through it. There are basically two reasons why we fail to receive forgiveness. The first is that we fail to accept our sins and repent, and the second is that we fail to forgive.

During Advent we are invited by the Church to **prepare for Christmas**. Christmas is the time for **reflection and personal renewal** in preparation for the coming of Jesus into our lives. John's preaching reminds us also of our important **task of announcing Christ** to others through our lives at home and in the community. May this advent help us to **come nearer to God**. God bless you.!