**2nd SUNDAY OF ADVENT [7th December, 2015]**

READINGS: Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11 / 2 Peter 3:8-14/ Mark 1:1-8

THEME: FILL YOUR VALLEY, LEVEL YOUR MOUNTAIN

By Very Rev. Fr. John Louis ([http://frlouis.com](http://frlouis.com/))

It is not unusual in Ghana that the visit by the president to a remote village with poor roads is preceded by the re-grading of the feeder roads or the construction of new ones. Pot-holes are filled up and hilly portions are leveled down. Similarly in the Old Testament times, the visit by a king required the preparation of the roads. Thus, when God, the King of kings, was to visit the Jews in exile in Babylon and lead them back to Jerusalem, his people had to symbolically prepare his way: ‘In the desert prepare the way of the Lord. Make straight …a highway for the Lord! Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low’ (Isaiah 40:3-5).

Similarly, John the Baptist saw his mission as the one who prepared the people for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Beloved, you and I also have to prepare the roads of our lives to meet the Lord, whose birthday we are about to celebrate. The preparation involves filling up the valleys in our lives and leveling down our mountains.

But what are the valleys and mountains in our lives? The bible helps us to understand the valleys and mountains in our lives.

**THE VALLEY**

 The valley is a:

1. Fertile ground
2. Point of invasion/ place of defeat
3. Place of wild beasts

**FERTILE GROUND**

The river that runs through the valley makes it fertile for growing crops. The valley is, therefore, a symbol of material riches. Material riches can sometimes obscure our vision of God or dull our devotion to him. Is the quest for prosperity, consciously or unconsciously, taking me away from God? If yes, then prosperity has become my valley.

**POINT OF INVASION/ DEFEAT**

A valley could be the point by which a city is invaded to conquer it. For instance, to defeat the city of Ai, Joshua went through the Jordan valley (Joshua 8); and it was in the Valley of Rephaim that David repeatedly defeated the Philistines (2 Sam 5:17-25). Therefore, the valley is a symbol of our weak-point or weakness. Do we have some weaknesses in our lives? If yes, then these are some of our valleys that need to be filled up.

**PLACE OF WILD BEASTS**

In the Jordan valley, there were bushy places infested with wild beasts like lions, tigers and wolves. Such places were no-go-areas for human beings. Are there places that Christians should not go that I go? These may be my valleys. Secondly, do I have wild tendencies or tempers? These may be my valleys that need to be filled up.

**MOUNTAIN**

In the bible, a mountain or hill is sometime a place or symbol of**:**

1. Heathen sacrifices
2. The illusion of earthly glory
3. An obstacle to goal

**HEATHEN SACRIFICES**

The bible likewise condemned heathen or pagan sacrifices offered on mountains (Deut. 12:2), or the worship of idols which took place there (1 Kgs. 14:23; Jer. 2:20). Once again, is idol worship what I have to deal with in my life, as I prepare to celebrate the birthday of the Lord?

**ILLUSION OF EARTHLY GLORY**

Satan took Jesus to the mountain top to show him the illusive glory of earth (Matt. 4:8). Thus, a mountain could symbolize illusive earthly glory, fame, wealth or power. Have I been seduced by any of these?

**OBSTACLE TO GOAL**

As a mountain could prevent one from reaching a goal or prevent one from seeing what is beyond it, so it could be symbolic of those things in my life that prevent me from reaching my spiritual goals or obscure my vision of the glory of God. What are some of these things that I have to begin to clear away from my life?

**CONCLUSION**

Beloved, in this season of Advent and beyond, may the Lord grant us abundant graces to fill up every valley in our lives and to level down every mountain as well, amen!