**2nd SUNDAY OF ADVENT [6th December, 2015]**

READINGS: Baruch 5.1-9/ Ps. 126/ Phil. 1.4-6, 8-11/ Luke 3.1-6

THEME: FILL YOUR VALLEY, LEVEL YOUR MOUNTAIN

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

Often in Africa, a visit by a president to a remote village is preceded by the re-grading or up-grading of poor roads. Tractor-size pot-holes are filled up and hilly portions are leveled down. Similarly, 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).

This message from Isaiah is quoted in Luke 3:1-6 (the gospel Reading) to describe the work of John the Baptist. The Baptist came to prepare his 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?

**1.0 THE VALLEY**

**1.1 FERTILE GROUND**

The river that runs through the valley makes it fertile for growing crops. The valley is, therefore, a symbol of material riches. Prosperity 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.

**1.2 POINT OF INVASION/ DEFEAT**

A valley could be the point by which a city is invaded and conquered (Joshua 8; 2 Sam 5:17-25). Therefore, the valley is a symbol of our moral 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.

**1.3 PLACE OF IDOL WORSHIP**

In the days of King Ahaz, some Jews, instead of worshipping Yahweh, went to the valley to worship idols (cf. 2 Chron. 28:3). Thus, our valley may be our involvement in idol worship, or the act of seeking protection from other deities.

 **1.4 SYMBOL OF OMISSION**

Compared to a level ground, a valley looks like an omission. So we can consider the sins of omission (good things that we have failed to do) as our valleys that need to be filled up.

**2.0 MOUNTAIN**

2.1 **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?

**2.2 SYMBOL OF PRIDE**

A mountain, being a higher ground, is symbolic of self-conceit or pride. Is this the mountain I have to clear from my life?

**2.3 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 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?

**2.4 SNOW REMAINS FOR LONGER PERIOD**

On very high mountains in temperate regions, snow may remain throughout the year. A mountain may therefore be symbolic of a ‘frozen progress’ in spirit; that is to say, stagnation in one’s spiritual life. Whatever is making me stagnant in spirit has become a mountain I have to deal with.

**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!