2ndSunday of Advent (2013)

Theme: **The Wolf and Lamb… the Child and Cobra Shall Live in Peace**

Readings: Isaiah 11:1-10 / Romans 15:4-9 / Matthew 3:1-12

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

This weekend, in South Africa and indeed in the whole of Africa and beyond we are mourning the departure of one of the great sons of Africa – the late President Nelson Mandela. Even in his period (1962-1990) of imprisonment he was a symbol of hope for equality between whites and blacks, as well as for peace and prosperity for all South Africans. After three decades of waiting, with the election of President Mandela in 1994, South Africans began to realize the dream of equality, peace and prosperity for all. As we ask God to bless the soul of this icon of forgiveness, equality, peace and selfless servant leadership, his story illustrates today’s message.

As South Africans hoped for a time of peace and prosperity, so in the first reading the prophet Isaiah told the Israelites about a future of absolute peace: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb; the leopard shall lie down with the young goat; the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den.They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Is. 11:6-9).

As President Mandela was the ‘messiah’ for the South Africans, so the prophet Isaiah prophesied that there would be a Messiah to bring peace and prosperity for the Israelites. The people of Israel had known peace and prosperity in the days of the son (King David) and grandson (King Solomon) of Jesse; and they were assured that the promised Messiah would come from the same house of Jesse: “There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots” (Is. 11:1).

What is more! The Messiah would be greater than David and Solomon! David was powerful but not as wise as Solomon; but He who was coming would be greater than these two kings; for He would not only be more powerful and wiser than them, He would have extra spiritual qualities that His predecessors did not have: “The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord” (Is. 11:2).

It is clear from history that great men and women achieved greatness not from the scratch but by building on the preparations others have made. In the case of President Mandela, the founders of African National Congress (ANC) prepared the ground and brought him on board. Similarly, various prophets prepared the way for the Messiah’s first coming; and today’s gospel reading informs us that John the Baptist was the one who made the immediate preparations for the coming of Jesus the Messiah (Mt. 3.) To prepare the Jews to be blessed with everlasting peace and heavenly prosperity in Jesus Christ, the Baptist proclaimed that all should be truly repented. That is, there should be a true sorrow for sins, a sincere resolve not to commit them again, an honest confession of sins, and an embrace of a new way of life.

Beloved, St. Paul says that “everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4, second reading). Therefore, beloved as we hope for the eternal peace and heavenly blessings that our Saviour Jesus Christ brings us, let us be truly repented. Finally, like the wolf and lamb, the calf and lion, the cow and bear, the child and cobra living in peace, so let us learn to forgive others and be reconciled with them – it is a way of getting used to the peace of heaven, where former enemies would be friends forever. Amen!