

Homily **2nd Sunday of Advent** (9.12.18)

## Don't conform yourselves to the standards of the world - model your lives on Christ

"The name God gives you for ever will be, 'Peace through integrity, and honour through devotedness.'"

Beautiful words taken from the prophet Baruch.

They've taken one of my favorite programs off the telly a few weeks ago, I don't know whether any of you enjoyed it, it was called "The Repair Shop". Yeah. My life is meaningless now. [laughter]. "The Repair Shop" is fantastic because it's got all these skilled, and very, very able-bodied people, who restore broken items, treasured items in families, and sometimes they're antique, sometimes they're just old. And they bring them back to integrity, for want of a better word, through their own devotedness to their skill, and you see plates and things with no visible lines left where cracks were and so on. And it came to my mind this week, when I was looking at these readings, that would that it was so easy to mend broken people.

We don't seem to have the same ability to mend our lives when we've gone astray in some ways. But those two things are essential human attributes - integrity and devotedness, these are what all the prophets, including John the Baptist, preached about repairing ourselves in a damaged world; Restoration was Baruch's message: people had been exiled and were being restored back to the land of God with these gifts, and this is the great quest of Advent; to approach the mystery of the presence of the incarnate God with integrity and devotedness. And many people have said to me in the past,

"Well, the world is so corrupt you can't be fully honest, because you'll be cheated," or I've even heard said

"Well, everybody else does it, so why shouldn't I do it?"

And the trouble is with that, is that we're conforming ourselves to the lowest common denominator that we encounter. And like John the Baptist, and indeed the prophets who went before him, we're meant to be a sign in the world like John. We often think that we live in a desperate age. That list in the gospel,

that preamble to John appearing with all those names, I think was done on purpose by Luke. He's expressing who was in charge of the worldly affairs, and they were all corrupt, violent or oppressive. You have Caesar who was an oppressive tyrant, these tetrarchs, who were really just corrupt leaders, and even the two high priests were into control for power and money. So, Luke is making this comparison in this corrupt and violent and oppressive world.

This is where John the Baptist appeared, a man full of integrity and devotedness. And okay, John isolated himself from society to make a point, but I don't think that's our vocation, we don't need to do that. But the issue is, we need to remember as prophets in the world, we'll only be prophets if we're a sign of integrity and devotedness, which will point others to the truth of God. So Advent for me is about looking at that brokenness and addressing it. So that when it comes to Christmas, it's not just another Christmas, but that I come with my mind purified by integrity and my heart with devotedness to give to God.