

'PREPARING THE WAY'

2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT - HOMILY – 4 DECEMBER 2016

How can we believe the ideal of the first reading from Isaiah 11:1-10?

How can we prepare for it?

Yet when we examine some of the national combatants from the First and Second World Wars, we see it is possible.

Bitter enemies becoming friends.

The wolf and lamb together peacefully.

The panther and kid.

The calf and lion.

I was speaking to someone recently who has devoted his Christian life in advocacy with the poor, marginalised and oppressed.

Part of the struggle against greed, corruption, self-interest, racism, religious intolerance, sexism and other challenges in Australia and elsewhere.

Yet at times, the remarkable happening, and occasionally, the vision of Isaiah a reality.

Next week we will have a sharing at all Masses from the members of our parish who travelled recently to our sister PARISH of BLACKALL/TAMBO in central Queensland.

We will hear stories of challenges, hardship, solidarity and friendship.

And signs of hope.

Isaiah invites us to never give up **HOPE**.

During the week a letter from South Sudan arrived.

The Sisters working in the area of South Sudan we support, sent Christmas Greetings to their donor groups.

"The year of 2016 closes with deep gratitude for all that has been as well as with our deepest hopes for a better year ahead."

They have no doubt that through their presence and involvement they are creating opportunities for the South Sudanese. And yet nationally:

"Certainly hardship and difficulty are involved and the shocking atrocities that continue to occur are equal to the worst anywhere.

Our biggest dilemma is to stand by, see and hear the tragedies that so many experience, yet remain as it were powerless to bring about a national change."

And, on the water irrigation project garden, they said,

"A great joy is to see the irrigation garden now in full operation.

The tanks (2 x 3,000 litres) are pumped full each day.

One supplies water for households and the other irrigates the garden.

The garden has become a great joy and source of wonder and is a welcome source of food."

Of course, not every village has a water well yet. At least 40 villages are still waiting.

Some donors have given food in the meantime.

"Again, thanks to your generosity more than 200 of the most marginalised of humanity have survived on your food rations.

We are so aware of working towards greater self-reliance and sustainability but we always find those who if not assisted would simply die of hunger.

We cannot stand by and witness this."

Like John the Baptist in the Gospel of Matthew, the Sisters do not give up.
They see the reality and bring hope in many practical ways.
Like John the Baptist they are **PREPARING THE WAY**.
Jesus is already present the first Christmas.

**YET HOW DO WE PREPARE THE WAY FOR THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST TO BE RECEIVED THIS CHRISTMAS?
HOW DO WE REPENT?
THROUGH THE HELP OF GOD, HOW DO WE ENABLE GOOD TO OVERCOME EVIL?**

Matthew's Gospel expands on this in the Last Judgement Scene 25:31-46.

*Feeding the hungry,
Giving something to drink to the thirsty,
Clothes to the naked,
Welcoming the stranger,
Taking care of the sick,
Visiting the prisons.*

And we think of our Christmas collection in the parish for families of prisoners.

And we think of our local parish St Vincent de Paul Society members distributing hampers to local people in need in our suburbs.

Yet much more.

In this next year Matthew's Gospel will show a light to guide us.

John the Baptist could not stand by.
He was involved.

**OVER THESE WEEKS OF ADVENT, WHAT DO WE NEED TO PRAY ABOUT?
WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO?
HOW DO WE PREPARE THE WAY?**

Let us pray.

Fr Gerry Hefferan – 'Preparing the Way' – 4 December 2016

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/120416.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://tinyurl.com/parishFacebook04122016>]