

## FIRST READING – C ADVENT 2

A reading from the book of the prophet Baruch.

**pronounced: *Bar-Rook***

**Pause – and look up at the assembly**

Take off the garment of your sorrow and suffering, O Jerusalem,  
and put on forever the beauty of the glory from God.

Put on the robe of the righteousness that comes from God;  
put on your head the diadem of the glory of the Everlasting;  
for God will show your splendour everywhere under heaven.

For God will give you evermore the name,  
“Righteous Peace, Godly Glory.”

Arise, O Jerusalem, stand upon the height;  
look toward the east,  
and see your children gathered from west and east  
at the word of the Holy One,  
rejoicing that God has remembered them.

For they went out from you on foot,  
led away by their enemies;  
but God will bring them back to you,  
carried in glory, as on a royal throne.

For God has ordered that every high mountain  
and the everlasting hills be made low  
and the valleys filled up, to make level ground,  
so that Israel may walk safely in the glory of God.

The woods and every fragrant tree  
have shaded Israel at God’s command.

For God will lead Israel with joy,  
in the light of his glory,  
with the mercy and righteousness that come from him.

**PAUSE for THREE seconds**

**then look up at the people**

**and say SLOWLY:**



The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

## SECOND READING – C ADVENT 2

A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians.

Pause - and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters,  
I thank my God every time I remember you,  
constantly praying with joy  
in every one of my prayers for all of you,  
because of your sharing in the Gospel  
from the first day until now.  
I am confident of this,  
that the one who began a good work among you  
will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.  
For God is my witness,  
how I long for all of you  
with the compassion of Christ Jesus.  
And this is my prayer,  
that your love may overflow more and more  
with knowledge and full insight  
to help you to determine what is best,  
so that in the day of Christ  
you may be pure and blameless,  
having produced the harvest of righteousness  
that comes through Jesus Christ  
for the glory and praise of God.



Pause for **THREE** seconds  
then look up at the people  
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

## GOSPEL READING – C ADVENT 2

The Lord be with you.

*And with your spirit.*

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

*Glory to you, O Lord.*

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius,  
when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea,  
and Herod was ruler of Galilee,  
and his brother Philip  
ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis,  
and Lysanias ruler of Abilene,  
during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas,  
the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.  
He went into all the region around the Jordan,  
proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins,  
as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,  
“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.  
Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth;  
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

*Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.*

## SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

### Reading I: Baruch 5:1-9

The Book of Baruch is one of the deuterocanonical and pseudonymous Old Testament writings that are not found in the Hebrew Bible and that have been termed, in Reformation tradition, the “Apocrypha.”

Like the Book of Daniel, it is attributed to a figure of the past—Baruch was Jeremiah’s secretary. The book presupposes for its situation the Babylonian Exile (586-538 B.C.), but it consists of various materials written later.

Today’s passage comes from the last part of the book, comprising two prophetic poems modeled on Second Isaiah, and forms the concluding section of the second poem. The fictitious situation it assumes is that of Israel waiting to return from exile.

It is difficult to be precise about the real situation, but the message was evidently written for Jews who later were living in the Diaspora. The miracle of the return is pictured in a series of supernatural events reminiscent of Isaiah 40 and, earlier still, of the Exodus itself.

This reading is a magnificent choice for this second Sunday of Advent. It matches the quotation of Isaiah 40 in the gospel and captures the Church’s Advent stance in the thrilling words: “Arise, O Jerusalem, stand upon the height and look toward the east.” The symbolism of salvation coming from the east like the dawn is deeply embedded in the Church’s Advent lore.

### Responsorial Psalm: 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6

The identical arrangement of this psalm was used on the thirtieth Sunday of the year in series B, and, as we noted there, it celebrates the return from Babylon. It is equally appropriate as a response to the reading from Baruch, since the author of that poem pictures the deliverance of the Diaspora in terms of the return from Babylon as foretold by Second Isaiah.

### Reading II: Philippians 1:4-6, 8-1

This passage comes from the opening thanksgiving (first paragraph) and intercession (second paragraph) of Philippians. If we accept the recent theory that Philippians is a compilation of three different letters sent by Paul to that community within a short period of time, this passage would come from the second letter. Paul is in prison at Ephesus (?). The Philippians’ envoy, Epaphroditus, who has brought along a “care package” for the incarcerated Apostle, had fallen sick but has now recovered.

Paul has also heard rumors that false teachers had either arrived or were about to arrive to stir up trouble in this faithful community, and so he is somewhat anxious about them.

He sends his second letter (1:1-3:1; 4:47) to tell them the news about himself and Epaphroditus, and to exhort them to unity. These concerns are reflected in the thanksgiving and the intercession.

As in 1 Thessalonians (see last Sunday's Second Reading), Paul regards the "day of Jesus Christ" (that is, the parousia) as the terminal point of Christian maturation. Of course, he thought that he and his readers, the majority anyhow, would still be alive on that day and that therefore all spiritual growth would take place entirely within their earthly existence.

Yet, by this time he had already written 1 Thessalonians and had faced the problem of Christians who had died before the parousia. It is therefore a reasonable extension of his meaning to suppose that the parousia remains the term of spiritual growth for all believers, including those already dead.

It is interesting that Paul characterizes Christian growth in the ethical terminology of Stoicism: "knowledge," "discernment," "approve what is excellent." Most interesting is the word for "discernment" (aisthesis).

Knowing that the will of God in concrete situations requires a kind of aesthetic sensibility, John A. T. Robinson once spoke of the Christian as having a set of built-in antennae to tell him or her what love requires in a particular situation. This, of course, is not the whole truth about Christian ethics, but it is an important factor and one to which the Apostle here gives countenance.

Gospel: Luke 3:1-6

On the second and third Sundays of Advent each year, the gospels focus on John the Baptist. In an elaborate dating (pointing probably to the year 27), Luke connects the appearance of the Baptist both to secular history and to salvation history as he brings the Baptist on stage in wording reminiscent of the appearance of the Old Testament prophets.

Luke has a view of John the Baptist different from Mark's. Mark thought of the Baptist as the *arche tou euangeliou*, the "beginning of the gospel," the point at which the salvation event began. Luke, by contrast, places John before the beginning of the salvation event.

The Baptist sums up in his own person the whole salvation history of the Old Testament; he stands at the head of the Old Testament prophets and points, as they did, to the coming Christ. The one difference is that John is the last of the prophets and announces Jesus' impending arrival.

Luke operates with two periods of salvation history—the Old Testament period, culminating with John, and the Jesus period, which is divided into two parts: the earthly history of Jesus (what he "began to do" [Acts 1:1]) and what he continues to do in the Church. This scheme is preferable to Conzelmann's three periods: the Old Testament, Jesus, and the Church.

John's baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins is, as the ensuing quotation from Isaiah 40 shows, essentially preparatory for the coming of the Messiah. Mark had already cited Isaiah 40, but Luke lengthens the quotation to include "all flesh shall see the salvation of God," which gives it a typically universalistic accent.

This, incidentally, also shows that John foretells what is essentially a single period, for the universal mission of the Church is included in the salvation event. That event embraces the content of both Luke's Gospel and the Book of Acts.

Reginald H. Fuller