

**Second Sunday of Advent – Year C
(Dec. 10, 2006)**

Where Are We Going?

Where are we going? How will we get there? And why ask these questions on this Second Sunday of Advent?

Well, the readings you just heard suggest a journey. The prophet Baruch and the prophet John the Baptist both quote the prophet Isaiah who is in fact talking about a journey, the journey home from exile in Babylon back to Jerusalem. It's a journey which is made easier by straightening out the road, getting rid of hills and valleys, and making a smooth, level path – an image that comes up repeatedly in Isaiah. In fact it's an image of salvation: going home.

Two of the great religious experiences of the Jewish people, experiences of deliverance, of salvation, of liberation from captivity, of going home, involved journeys, the exodus from Egypt and the exodus from Babylon.

Every year during the season of Advent, as we begin once again to tell the story of Jesus, the Church reminds us that we, too, are on a journey. All those images of traveling that you hear or read in the Bible are metaphors for the journey of life. We are all journeying. We are a pilgrim people.

Where are we going? Where will this journey take us? Ultimately, of course, to God. But how do we get there?

As banal as it may sound, we get there by being who we are supposed to be and doing what we are supposed to do, as God intended us to be and to do.

And how do we find that out? Basically, by living the Liturgical Year that we began all over again last Sunday. We listen once again to the story of Jesus. We contemplate, we reflect upon who he is and what he must mean to us. We listen once again to the challenges of the Gospel and we pray sincerely that God will give us the strength, the courage, the grace to accept those challenges. And then, with God's help, we do it. That's how we become who God wants us to be and how we do what God wants us to do. That's how we get to where we are supposed to go.

You know, like those people coming out of Egypt and crossing the desert to the Promised Land, and like those people returning from exile in Babylon, we journey together. We are not alone

And if the road is rough we do our best to make it smooth. If there are pot-holes we fill them in – and we do it together so that the journey becomes easier for us all. We travel together. We support one another. And if some grow weak or weary along the way, if some need help, then we who are stronger reach out and lift them up so that together we can all come safely and successfully to the end of the journey.

Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is never very far from our thoughts during this Advent season. This past Friday we celebrated the Feast of the Immaculate Conception and on Tuesday we will remember Our Lady of Guadalupe. In the early chapters of Luke's Gospel we see Mary embarking on some very important journeys. Immediately after saying "Yes" to God and learning that her cousin Elizabeth is going to have a child she sets out for the hill country where Elizabeth lives. It's a difficult journey through dangerous territory, but now carrying the Son of God with her she has no fear and hastens to the aid of her elderly cousin. Then there are those other journeys: the one to Bethlehem with Joseph where her child would be born and then to Egypt to escape the wrath of an angry, jealous tyrant, then back to Nazareth to raise their son, the Son of God. It's like a foreshadowing of what Jesus' life will be like, journeying through Galilee and other parts of the Holy Land and even into Gentile territory to carry the message of God's love and care to all the people, a marvelous example to all of us as we pray this Sunday about our own life's journey.

Listening to the news on television or reading about it in the papers, I sometimes get the feeling that the world we live in has lost its way on this journey. But whatever our fears, whatever our misgivings or difficulties we have hope and we have faith in the fidelity of God. On the feast of the Immaculate Conception once again we heard Mary say, I am the servant of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to your word. Her trust, her confidence were so great that she could consent to whatever God had planned for her – even though she could not have possibly understood all that that was going to mean.

So as we continue to journey together during this Advent season and

beyond to that ultimate meeting with God, to what Paul calls the day of Christ Jesus, the fact is that the Lord is already with us. He is Emmanuel, God with us, and we can be sure that Paul's prayer for his friends at Philippi that we heard in the second reading is true for us as well:

Our love will more and more abound, both in understanding and wealth of experience, so that with a clear conscience and blameless conduct we may learn to value the things that really matter, up to the very day of Christ. We will be found rich in the harvest of justice, which Jesus Christ has ripened in us, to the glory and praise of God.