



2nd SUNDAY of ADVENT ***YEAR A – December 8, 2019***

There is a story about a remarkable event that took place in the early days of British history. At that time, the punishment for public crimes was often cruel and unusual.

A man was caught stealing sheep. The authorities ordered the letters S and T standing for sheep thief to be branded on his forehead. The man spent the rest of his life trying to live down those words. He succeeded beautifully in doing just that.

When he reached old age, the ST could still be seen on his forehead and when children asked their parents what the letters stood for, their parents said reverently, "They stand for the word Saint – that man is a saint".

The story reminds us what the season of Advent is all about. It's the season that invites us to transform ourselves from sinners into saints.

It's the season that invites us to take to heart the words of John the Baptist in today's Gospel, "Reform, reshape, refashion your life, for the kingdom of God is at hand". That kingdom is not in some far-off distant land, *that kingdom* is within us.

There is no better way to prepare for Christmas than to get our spiritual house in order. It may mean that we must look into some corners of our soul that have been neglected for one reason or another. We have the capacity to change for the better, we also have the capacity to change for the worse. Advent is the time in our Liturgical Year to reflect on how we have changed since the last Advent season. Was it for the better or was it for something else?

To be human is to change, to be perfect is to have changed often. Our challenge from Jesus is to become perfect as our heavenly father is perfect. We have the capacity to do that.

Advent is the season that invites us to take to heart, Paul's prayer for us in the second reading today. He prays, "May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think in harmony with one another, in keeping with Christ Jesus, that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ".

If we allow Jesus to be born again in each of us, we can literally change the world, at least the part of the world in which we live. We all long for happiness, our Lord's way is the only way to find it.

For a few moments in silence, reflect on how you will use this second week of Advent to prepare the house of the Lord for the coming of Jesus. Not the "house" in which we gather each week for Mass - but the one within you.

