Second Sunday of Advent - A 2019

Once again the voice of John the Baptist cries out ‘Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight.

In these ‘dark days before Christmas’, in our confusing world, with an election coming up - whose outcome is extremely uncertain, it is easy to get lost in the tangled thickets of life. And so it is reassuring to hear the clear voices of Isaiah and then John the Baptist speaking of hope with such confidence.

Often when I am baptising babies, in a packed church with very few people there having any knowledge or understanding of what I am doing I find my spirits failing a little. But when I speak of hope - presenting the children with a candle - the light of Christ, which represents the triumph of hope - of light over darkness, of life over death - then I feel I am saying something really important to all those gathered - something all can grasp. If we have hope we can survive anything. Some people will say that hope is treacherous - you are led on in expectation only to be bitterly disappointed. And certainly we all experience the collapse of our hopes. But hope is a state of mind - closely allied to faith and to peace - which trusts that ultimately all will come to good. As Julian of Norwich put it ‘All shall be well, all shall be well; and you shall see it yourself that all manner of things shall be well’. Those who live without hope, those who live with depression, need our help and our prayers. Life without hope is not worth living.

Light at this time of the year is scarce, but the year will turn before long - slowly the light of dawn will reach us - it will not fail. It is Advent - we wait patiently.

We can even vote with hope! Indeed it is neglect on our part if we do not vote - it is our duty to act, in hope, for the good of our world. It is up to us to judge how best we can do that - but inaction shows a radical failure of hope.

John the Baptist and earlier Isaiah lived in times of turmoil and conflict. Despite all they lived through they proclaimed the coming of judgement, of order, of peace. We, the Church. continue to proclaim these things, until the Lord calls us to dwell with Him eternally in Glory - all hopes fulfilled.