

Fr. John's Homily **2nd Sunday of Advent, December 5, 2021**

Advent is a preparation season for Christmas. I asked us last week to open our hearts and allow God's love to enter in more deeply, to let the Lord have His way within us. Advent is a time to listen to the prophets, like John the Baptist. We look at the person and mission of Saint John the Baptist. From the words of Jesus Himself, He said there is not a person born of women that is greater than John the Baptist. The person: a man of prayer, dedication, commitment, determination, fidelity, fasting, focused, life of simplicity and poverty, and a great man of boldness and courage. In His mission He never wavered, He was the voice crying out in the desert, John the Baptist proclaimed: "*Make ready the way of the Lord, clear him a straight path.*"

We make ready and prepare for the coming of Christ in **History**, when Christ was born in Bethlehem. It is a time to prepare for the coming of Christ, at this Mass, in the Eucharist, **sacramentally**. It is a time to prepare for the coming of Christ at the end of time, in the **final** time. We know we have to answer to God at the time of our own death, but there will be a time when the Lord will return in Power and Majesty. The question is: will we be ready?

In the midst of all this preparing, we acknowledge too that the Lord is present already and desires to come to us every day. We can easily miss Him as we get caught up in the Christmas rush of preparing food and trips, purchasing gifts, sending Christmas cards, parties and that somehow God, who comes to us quietly knocking at our door of our hearts, can be missed entirely. Advent is the season to prevent this, and to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas.

For many today, especially as we continue with the lingering effects of the pandemic and as more time goes on, God has now become very distant. This is not the God we celebrate in this holy season of the Church. Listen to the words of the prophet Baruch, probably a secretary of Jeremiah. He states: God is of tenderness and very near, who shows patience to all people, desiring that no one be lost, turn to God and live! He is not a distant God but a God who dwells very close to us as His people. Remember God traveled with His chosen people, under a tent for many years, then through King David and Solomon now the Temple, Israelites were reminded that God is still traveling with us to our Homeland. This is why Baruch says: "Take off your robe of mourning and misery; put on the splendor of glory from God forever." God is leading Israel in joy by the light of his glory, with his mercy and justice for company. The remnant of God's people are called to draw near their God, and rejoice for God is our Emmanuel, God who is with us.

Jesus Christ is the presence of God. We remember He said that when two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in the midst. He surrounds us in the world we inhabit, yes even in our brokenness. It might be hard to see it at times but He is there. Just like He is there for the people in Michigan, from the latest school shooting. The tragic and sad times once again, bring us to the reality of the brokenness and sickness in the world and at the same time we in Faith we are called to celebrate God's presence with us. It is a mystery, however we know God is here in the tears and sadness. He is there in the hurt and pains. He is there in fears and confusion. He is there. Do we believe this, that no matter how dark, broken, sick our world may become that God is dwelling in our midst?

This Advent has we are making more room for Jesus within, then we can begin to pray like St. Francis of Assisi, Lord make me an instrument of your Peace, or Love, Joy, Hope, Light etc.... When we are surrounded by so much negative and disheartening news and stories, we can become discouraged and want to give up trying. The call as followers of Jesus is otherwise. Living in Christ, as Saint Paul calls it, we learn that where there is sincere and faithful love, even in the midst of darkness and evil, God is present.

Advent is the time given to us by the Church, to help us live our daily lives under God's watchful care. God became human in Jesus Christ so that we might go to God and partake of divine life. St. Athanasius: God became man so we can become like God. This is a very special grace given to us, and so we open our hearts to God and his ways.

And so we turn to John the Baptist once again, remembering the man and his mission. Look at ourselves as a person and ponder ourselves what kind of person am I, what is my mission in life? Hopefully this advent is preparing our hearts for Jesus: So using some of the **Litany of St. John the Baptist** I invite us to open our hearts and pray:

Your response is "Have mercy on us".

God the Father of Heaven, *Have mercy on us*. God the Son, Redeemer of the world, *Have mercy on us*. God the Holy Spirit, *Have mercy on us*. Holy Trinity, One God, *Have mercy on us*.

Your response is "Pray for us".

Holy Mary, *pray for us*. Queen of Prophets, *pray for us*. Queen of Martyrs, *pray for us*. Saint John the Baptist, *pray for us*. St. John the Baptist, precursor of Christ, *pray for us*. St. John the Baptist, glorious forerunner of the Sun of Justice, *pray for us*. St. John the Baptist, burning and shining lamp of the world, *pray for us*. St. John the Baptist, special friend and favorite of Christ, *pray for us*. St. John the Baptist, preacher of truth, *pray for us*. St. John the Baptist, voice crying in the wilderness, *pray for us*. St. John the Baptist, example of profound humility, *pray for us*. St. John the Baptist, glorious martyr of zeal for God's holy law, *pray for us*. St. John the Baptist, gloriously fulfilling thy mission, *pray for us*.

Let us pray: O God, Who hast honored this world by the birth of Saint John the Baptist, grant that Thy faithful people may rejoice in the way of eternal salvation, through Jesus Christ Our Lord. R. *Amen*.