

## Advent 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday: “Prepare the way for the Lord.”

The true prophets of Israel help us in our struggle against all forms of duplicity. We can call John the Baptist, the patron saint of authenticity. John the Baptist seems the very paradox of Advent: the coming of God manifesting precisely in the darkness of the present age.

John lives and works in the desert. Desert is a symbol: its un-attractive, has no beauty of cooling freshness; silent and lonely. Only hermits and the courageous can live there. Jesus would state that the desert is in contraposition to palace. Though John knew that sidelining with the royal throne means prosperity and abundance, he wanted to remain “the voice” crying in the wilderness. Beyond himself, giving importance to the word of God that he preaches, he alone can become “the voice”.

- *John the Bap. heard*, experienced and lived God’s liberating word in the desert and was thus able to preach it to others so effectively because *his life and message were one and the same*. He shatters the silence of the wilderness with his cry: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” Not just “repent,” but *change the way we live*, = to prepare for the coming of the kingdom of heaven which will upset and overturn all our securities.

There was nothing politically correct about the Baptist’s message. He got right to the point and said what needed to be said. He told the first people who came to him *to share*. He told the tax collectors *to be just*. He told the soldiers *to make peace*.

As Baptist taught the people of his day, in our day the *Messiah comes to save us from the powers of duplicity, despair, darkness and death*, and to put us back on the path of peace and reconciliation, so that we might

find our way back to God. John the Baptist's life and mission remind us how badly we need a Savior to save us, in order that we *might be all that we are called to be and do all that we have to do to live in the Light*. So often, we may fail to recognize the one among us who is our Way, our Truth and our Life. Friends, Advent is all about: *finding our way back to God; Set our hearts on fire!*

Advent is a *mystery* that transforms, and not simply informs. Advent remains with its paradoxical combination of waiting and hastening, suffering and joy, judgment and deliverance. Unfortunately for our culture of instant gratification, hope requires incompleteness. To hope, in the Advent fashion, is to live with the certainty of unfulfilled desire.

Hope in God cannot stand still, because—as Isaiah reminds us, we hope in a God who is constantly doing new things. Does our hope in God hold fast in the face of chaos and confusion in our life? How do we live with the Word of God? How can we live with the silence of God?

*Advent teaches* us that if we are quiet in our hearts, we will discover the God, who turns the desert places of our lives into oases of wonder, life & beauty, even though nothing will be as we expected.

*Again, Advent is invitation to revisit our dependence on God, to revisit our desire for God and to discover through the night of waiting that, God does indeed come.*

The message of Advent is not that everything is falling apart. Nor is it that God is in heaven and all is therefore well with the world. Rather, we submit once again to the JB's consoling message: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." Yes, Advent is all about: *finding our way back to God; Set our hearts on fire! Amen*

