

Advent 2nd Sunday

John the Baptist, with his austere appearance and powerful look, want to prepare his people for the coming of the Lord. He sounds like talking about “*road building and repair*”: “Make the ground level,” “straighten the crooked ways,” and “make the rough road smooth”.

Poetically, the Baptist uses *image of the road* to show how we can either encourage or obstruct God’s entrance into our lives.

The Advent Season invites us to self-examination, leading to self-reform. God’s Kingdom is a rule over man’s hearts and to belong to it means a change of heart manifested in a change for the better.

First Reading: Isaiah prophesying, “*a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse*”. Jesse is the father of king David. When king David’s throne was overthrown, it remained vacant for centuries. Moral decay and miscarried justice had made the kingdom look like a wasteland. But God promised that a shoot would sprout from one trunk, and life and vitality would remerge. This messianic king would rule forever because the spirit of God would rest upon him, and he is anointed with divine wisdom and gifts of the Spirit. He would establish the kg. of God, not by force of human will or military power, but by offering his own life as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of all.

Christmas will lack its full meaning if *we do not prepare in our own hearts a way for the Lord*. It is in our hearts that we need to make a straight highway for God. It is the *hills of our individualism, egoism and pride that we need to level up!* Its valleys of unforgiveness, resentment and jealousy in our own hearts that are to be filled with God’s mercy and healing.

Advent is a challenge to repentance. It is a challenge to do something new and different for God. Making our heart, new and clean again!

Friends, let's make every effort to remove all that prevents God's entrance into our lives! Can you imagine, what would the Baptist say to us today, if he visits us? To our Catholic community?

He would certainly invite us:

- to repent of our mediocrity, to get down on our knees and ask God to set our hearts on fire. He would also call us to convert the lukewarm heart in us, and "*Be on fire for Christ.*"

-Prove to the world that you believe, not only by repenting but also by *believing in the gospel*. What does it mean today, to believe? Be passionate about your faith and in doing so, *you will live your faith in a way that not only changes your own life, but the world around you.*

We are living now in this time of mercy when we have an opportunity to repent. *The Lord has no limits to what he wants to give us, it is we who put limits on what he wants to give us.* The Lord is waiting to receive you in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, to take you in his arms and hold you close to his breast. Let us pray as much as we can during this season of Advent.

During this season of Advent, we think also in a special way of **Bl. Mary**, who carries in her womb, her son Jesus. Pray to her and ask her to help you prepare your heart for Jesus. So during Advent, perhaps to help you on this, is to pray the rosary!

Its now that the devil will tempt you, not to do any of these and continue with our mediocrity, and not to set our hearts on fire! The choice is yours, and I do pray that our liturgy today brings you the grace to listen to the invitation of the Baptist, to repentance, mercy and reconciliation, thus, to prepare our heart for the Lord who comes to visit us. Amen

Fr. James 😊