



More than Words

A weekly resource for Sunday Liturgy ...
Only by encountering Christ and opening ourselves to his goodness is our weariness soothed, our energy quickened, and our lives expressed in the joy of the Word being made flesh in us today!

John the Baptist diverted attention from himself to Jesus. His ministry was not about himself but about the "One mightier than I [who] is coming after me." He proclaimed repentance, prepared for Jesus, and died — this was the pattern of John's life. Actually, it's the pattern of Jesus' life, too: he proclaimed the Good News, prepared the way to the Father, and died. Further, it's the pattern of our own paschal mystery living: proclaim the gospel of repentance, prepare for Christ's many comings, die to ourselves.

Our being baptized "with the Holy Spirit" enables us to do the work of God, for by baptism we are grafted onto Christ. In baptism we become heralds, like John, of Christ's redeeming Presence in our world. By our Christian living (blamelessly and with righteousness) we not only point to Christ, but we also make present the Christ who dwells in us. The challenge of Gospel living is ever to seek encounters with Christ, surrender ourselves to the Holy Spirit, cooperate with the divine Life coursing within us. Once we are armed with this kind of divine Presence and power, then we, too, can be messengers, like John, of the Lord's coming for all we meet in our daily Gospel living.

Gospel, Second Sunday of Advent, December 7

Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way.

A voice of one crying out in the desert: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. John was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey.

And this is what he proclaimed: "One mightier than I is coming after me.

I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals.

I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."



Study

Each of the four gospel writers was faced with the decision how to begin telling their story of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Mark begins his Gospel with Jesus as an adult, connecting Jesus with the preaching activities of John the Baptist in Judea.

Connecting the Gospel

to the second reading: The Spirit with whom Jesus baptizes creates for us "new heavens and a new earth." This is part of the life-transforming change that the Lord's coming makes possible and is already a glimpse of the fulfillment of all things at Christ's Second Coming.

to experience: We spend Advent preparing for the Lord's coming and this is appropriate. But Advent is more than a four-Sunday season; it is a whole way of life. Our baptismal lives are characterized by constant preparing for the assured change in us that every coming of Christ brings.

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: A new day is coming when salvation (psalm) will replace sin and servitude (first reading), when God will come with power (first reading) and peace (psalm). A new person is coming, the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit (gospel). God's own justice will prepare the way (psalm). But so are we to prepare the way (gospel, first reading). We who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit are to be persons of "holiness and devotion" (second reading) whose manner of living heralds the kindness, peace, truth, and justice (psalm) of the new heavens and new earth we so eagerly await (second reading).

Reflect

What I need to make straight in my life to prepare the way of the Lord is . . .

This changes my life by . . .

The Lord for me is . . .

This Advent I hope to learn that . . .

The Holy Spirit within me prepares me for . . . moves me to . . . changes me by . . .

Act

Today's Scriptures continue the Advent theme of preparing to welcome the Lord — this Christmas and at the Second Coming. The Second Reading tells us to "be eager to be found without spot or blemish," and John the Baptist calls us to repentance.

Make plans to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation at a parish penance service as part of your personal spiritual preparation for Christmas.

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