

2nd Sunday of Advent

John the Baptist described himself as “**a voice**”; a voice of one crying in the wilderness. Some people heard that voice and responded, preparing their hearts to welcome God into their lives in a new and unexpected way.

We hear John the Baptist’s voice calling to us to prepare a way for the Lord.



Isaiah 40:1-5. 9-11

God tells the people of Israel to be consoled: they’ve paid the price of their sins and now they’ve got to prepare a way for the Lord in a repentant heart.

2 Peter 3:8-14

We are waiting for God to bring about the long-promised **new heavens** and **new earth**. In the meantime, we should live good lives and be at peace.

Mark 1:1-8

John the Baptist appeared, promising that he was preparing the way for someone greater than he was. He baptised with water but the one, whose coming he foretold, would baptise with the Holy Spirit.

Reflection



MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT

The second Sunday of Advent introduces us to John the Baptist. John is one who's task is to prepare a way for the Lord who is coming. Today's Mass invites us to begin our spiritual preparation for Christmas.

Today we begin reading the holy gospel according to Mark. Mark will be our guide to the memory of Jesus Christ for most of the Sundays of this coming year. That's why we call it the year of Mark.

Marks Gospel is the first of the four Gospels; the first to set down the story of how God met us human beings in the life of Jesus Christ.

Mark begins with a glorious statement: he says he's going to tell **'the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.'** Our older translations used the term "Gospel" instead of "Good News". Gospel is the shortened form of "god-spel" which is an Old English word meaning "good news". All these words are attempts to translate the Greek word which Mark uses: "evangelion". Imagine a world without TV, radio or newspapers. The town-crier or the herald of the king would proclaim any news, any great events, to the people. When the happening announced was something that called for joy and celebration they called it an "evangelion". It could be news of a victory in battle or perhaps a birth in the royal family

The Christian writers, Paul and Mark especially, took over this word, 'evangelion', and invested it with a divine depth of meaning. As the herald of the great king, Mark begins his story of Jesus Christ with the proclamation that this is an 'evangelion'. His use of the word has remained until our own day whenever we refer to the 'Gospel' or to the 'Good News'.

After his initial proclamation, Mark begins his story by telling us how John the Baptist went before Jesus, as a messenger to prepare the way and as a voice calling out in the wilderness. Mark picks up on the popular expectation that the prophet of olden times, Elijah, would come back to prepare the people for the Messiah. John appears in the primitive, non-conformist style of Elijah who had been described as 'a man wearing a hair cloak and a leather loincloth.' (2 Kgs 1:8)

Mark differs from the other Gospel-writers, Matthew and Luke, in that he does not have John the Baptist preaching a coming judgment as the urgent motive for repentance. In Mark's gospel, repentance wears a happy face.

Today's Mass links this gospel with Isaiah's great message of consolation in the first reading. 'Console my people Jerusalem's time of service is ended her sin is atoned for.' Isaiah continues: 'Sion, here is your God.' And that, of course, is exactly the Good News which Mark sees the Baptist preparing for the coming of God.



The Good News John the Baptist brings is twofold: it concerns

1. **acknowledgment by people of their sins**; and it offers the hope that
2. **someone is coming**, someone powerful, someone who will release the life-giving waters of God's Spirit upon the earth.

Later on, the preaching of Jesus will carry on this twofold message: **repent** and **believe**.

It may seem strange to suggest that the Good News is first and foremost about sin. But it's true that although everyone admits that there's a tremendous lot wrong with our world, at the same time we've largely forgotten the name of the disease.

When a doctor diagnoses what's wrong with a patient, then the anxiety of all the unknown possibilities is removed. The name of society's disease is **sin**. John the Baptist enabled people to accept this diagnosis; he then led them to the waters of renewal. Here the energy of that '**repent**' comes, not so much from the fear of judgment, but from the approaching sound of the footfalls of the Messiah.

The work of John the Baptist was not to be an end in itself. He came like Elijah to prepare the way for the Messiah. And so, John's function was to hand over to the One with God's power and worthiness, the One invested with the Holy Spirit.

This Advent, repentance comes as a message of consolation. If you like, it is penance with a happy face. It is Good News when we acknowledge truthfully our personal responsibility for sin; when we place our hope in the divine power of the Holy Spirit, a power that Jesus released for our forgiveness and healing.

The Good News began in the **diagnosis** of our pain, sin; and in recognising the healing power that God sends us, **the Holy Spirit**.



Blessed Carlo Acutis

“When we face the sun, we get a tan,” said Blessed Carlo Acutis, “but when we stand before Jesus in the Eucharist, we become saints.”

Receive Jesus in Spiritual Communion when you can't go to Mass



SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

During this Covid Pandemic, people who are unable to attend Mass are encouraged to make what is called “a Act of Spiritual Communion”.

This one is by St Alphonsus Liguori:

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the most Blessed Sacrament.



I love you above all things and I desire to receive you into my soul.

Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace you as if you were already there, and unite myself wholly to you.

Never permit me to be separated from you.

Amen.

WORDSEARCH

S	M	E	S	S	E	N	G	E	R
T	S	L	A	D	N	A	S	E	E
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- RIVER
- ISAIAH
- MESSENGER
- WILDERNESS
- BAPTISM
- REPENTANCE
- CAMELSKIN
- LOCUSTS
- HONEY
- STRAP
- SANDALS
- SPIRIT