

6 DECEMBER 2020

Sunday Message

2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE WORD

Year B • Psalter Week 2



REFLECT

The Gospel of Mark opens with Jesus as an adult; there are no stories about the circumstances of his conception and birth. The evangelist confronts us immediately with the uncomfortable figure of John the Baptist and his call to rethink our way of life and our priorities, especially our relationship with our God. By presenting his understanding of Jesus as a story, Mark is inviting us to become part of the story, to involve ourselves in what is going on as we read or hear the various Gospel episodes. So today we can listen to John the Baptist's preaching not simply as something which happened a long time ago, but as something addressed to each one of us individually today.

The word *metanoia*, usually translated as "repentance", really means "to change one's way of thinking". In many ways, it is easy to adjust our behaviour, to correct faults and adopt positive practices. It takes more effort, and honesty, to examine our attitudes and beliefs and to change those. Advent is the time when we are invited to think, not so much about the baby Jesus, but rather about the coming of God the Lord into our lives and hearts here and now. We might think about our own baptism and what that means to us. If we use the next three weeks to look at what Jesus means to us and draw closer to him in friendship, it will be time well spent. ■

DO

Make the Sign of the Cross with holy water and think about your baptism: how could you deepen your relationship with God during Advent?



SAY

Prepare a way for the Lord:
make his paths straight.
(Mark 1:3; Isaiah 40:3)

PREPARE THE WAY! (MARK 1:1-8)

Relief of St John the Baptist in the Church of San Alessandro della Croce in Bergamo, Italy

Our Advent Gospel passage today presents us with the figure of John the Baptist. Mark casts him in the mould of the prophet Elijah, summoning his listeners to repent and return to the Lord their God.

He is preaching in the wilderness, a place associated in Jewish thought with that period during the Exodus when God and the people of Israel enjoyed a relationship of particularly close intimacy. However, the main emphasis in this extract is on John as the one who heralds the coming of the Messiah and calls on his hearers to prepare themselves for the coming of the one they are waiting for. The evangelist may be exaggerating when he says that *all* Judaea and *all* the people of Jerusalem answered his call, but John is shown elsewhere as enjoying widespread respect.

Mark presents Jesus as the fulfilment of the Jewish scriptures by quoting from the prophets Isaiah and Malachi in John's call to prepare a way for the Lord: John describes Jesus as the one who is more powerful than he is, which indicates that although later he baptises Jesus, he is not greater than Jesus. John's baptism is a symbol of the person's willingness to amend their life. The baptism of the one coming who is greater than John will be with the Holy Spirit: this Spirit represents the power of God at work to bring about holiness in the person, and so represents a deeper renewal than that of the Baptist. This is the beginning of the Good News. ■

LEARN

The Gospel according to Mark has no "infancy narrative": the evangelist introduces Jesus as an adult.

Mark presents John the Baptist in terms of the Old Testament prophet Elijah.

The Old Testament reading at Mass is connected with the reading from the Gospel and shows the connection between the Hebrew and Christian scriptures.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

**O people of Sion, Behold,
the Lord will come to save the nations,
and the Lord will make the glory of his voice
heard
in the joy of your heart.**

COLLECT

Almighty and merciful God,
may no earthly undertaking hinder those
who set out in haste to meet your Son,
but may our learning of heavenly wisdom
gain us admittance to his company.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Isaiah 40:1-5. 9-11

A reading from the prophet Isaiah
"Console my people, console them"
says your God.
"Speak to the heart of Jerusalem
and call to her
that her time of service is ended,
that her sin is atoned for,
that she has received from the hand of the
Lord
double punishment for all her crimes."

A voice cries, "Prepare in the wilderness
a way for the Lord.
Make a straight highway for our God
across the desert.
Let every valley be filled in,
every mountain and hill be laid low,
let every cliff become a plain,
and the ridges a valley;
then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed
and all mankind shall see it;
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

Go up on a high mountain,
joyful messenger to Zion.
Shout with a loud voice,
joyful messenger to Jerusalem.
Shout without fear,
say to the towns of Judah,
"Here is your God."

Here is the Lord coming with power,
his arm subduing all things to him.
The prize of his victory is with him,
his trophies all go before him.
He is like a shepherd feeding his flock,
gathering lambs in his arms,
holding them against his breast
and leading to their rest the mother ewes.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalm 84

Response:

**Let us see, O Lord, your mercy
and give us your saving help.**

1. I will hear what the Lord God has to say,
a voice that speaks of peace,
peace for his people.
His help is near for those who fear him
and his glory will dwell in our land. (R.)
2. Mercy and faithfulness have met;
justice and peace have embraced.
Faithfulness shall spring from the earth
and justice look down from heaven (R.)
3. The Lord will make us prosper
and our earth shall yield its fruit.
Justice shall march before him
and peace shall follow his steps. (R.)

SECOND READING 2 Peter 3:8-14

A reading from the second letter of Peter
There is one thing, my friends, that you must
never forget: that with the Lord, "a day"
can mean a thousand years, and a thousand
years is like a day. The Lord is not being slow
to carry out his promises, as anybody else
might be called slow; but he is being patient
with you all, wanting nobody to be lost and
everybody to be brought to change his ways.
The Day of the Lord will come like a thief,
and then with a roar the sky will vanish, the
elements will catch fire and fall apart, the
earth and all that it contains will be burnt up.

Since everything is coming to an end like
this, you should be living holy and saintly
lives while you wait and long for the Day of
God to come, when the sky will dissolve in
flames and the elements melt in the heat.
What we are waiting for is what he promised:
the new heavens and new earth, the place
where righteousness will be at home. So
then, my friends, while you are waiting, do
your best to live lives without spot or stain so
that he will find you at peace.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Alleluia, alleluia!
Prepare a way for the Lord,
make his paths straight,
and all mankind shall see the salvation of
God.
Alleluia.**

GOSPEL Mark 1:1-8

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Mark.

The beginning of the Good News about Jesus
Christ, the Son of God. It is written in the
book of the prophet Isaiah:

Look, I am going to send my messenger
before you;
he will prepare your way.
A voice cries in the wilderness:
Prepare a way for the Lord,
make his paths straight,

and so it was that John the Baptist appeared
in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism
of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
All Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem
made their way to him, and as they were
baptised by him in the river Jordan they
confessed their sins. John wore a garment
of camel-skin, and he lived on locusts and
wild honey. In the course of his preaching he
said, "Someone is following me, someone
who is more powerful than I am, and I am not
fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his
sandals. I have baptised you with water, but
he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

**I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,**

**begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
(all bow during the next three lines)
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Be pleased, O Lord, with our humble prayers
and offerings,
and, since we have no merits to plead our
cause,
come, we pray, to our rescue
with the protection of your mercy.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**Jerusalem, arise and stand upon the heights,
and behold the joy which comes to you from
God.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Replenished by the food of spiritual
nourishment,
we humbly beseech you, O Lord,
that, through our partaking in this mystery,
you may teach us to judge wisely the things
of earth
and hold firm to the things of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

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This is the time of year when we remember
that God sent his only son "to serve, not to
be served". He restored love and service to
the centre of our lives in the person of Jesus
Christ.

Queen Elizabeth II