

Homily for Second Sunday of Advent, December 6:

Two persons walk with us through Advent. They are The Blessed Mother, and John the Baptist. They are born in anticipation of the Messiah. They give us a good example to follow. And they continue to help us with their prayers.

Today, we read of John the Baptist. John is the link between the Old Covenant and the New. John is the last of the Prophets. He prepares the way of the Lord.

John is living and is clothed in a way that reminds everyone of the great prophet Elijah. Because God took Elijah up in a fiery chariot, it came to be understood that he had not died, and that God would bring him back some day.

In The Book of the Prophet Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, the final verses include this prophecy:

“Lo, I will send you Elijah, the prophet, Before the Day of the Lord comes...to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers.”

John the Baptist comes in the spirit of Elijah. John prepares the way of the Lord through his preaching. He prepares the way through his baptism of repentance. He makes it clear to those who will listen that he is not the Messiah. But the Messiah, who he is preparing everyone for, will pour forth a baptism not just of water, but the Holy Spirit will be poured forth.

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John was so effective in turning the hearts of people because he knew Jesus. John is a relative of Jesus. John, while still in Elizabeth’s womb, leapt for joy in the presence of Christ, in the womb of Mary. John knew Jesus.

We can take John’s example, and strive to be witnesses like John. We just need to remember that what we need is to know Jesus. And that seems so natural; because that is what we want – to know Jesus. Not just know about Him, but know Him. To share Christ with others is simply to give others what we have; friendship with Christ.

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For those of us with the responsibility to preach, there is one reminder we are given over and over again.

From Pope Paul the Sixth: “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”

In another place: “I can’t lead people to a God I don’t know. We have to COME be disciples in order to GO be apostles.”

This one in Latin: “*Nemo dat quod non habet,*” meaning “no one gives what he doesn’t have.”

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This advice is advice for all of us; because we all have the responsibility to proclaim the coming of Our Lord. How do we proclaim Him effectively? By proclaiming Him who we know.

Why do we pray? Why do we come to Mass, study, read the bible, and serve the poor? So that we may know Christ and let Jesus’ friendship grow within us. When we know Him, we can prepare the way of Christ’s coming in the world. When we know Him, we can be like John the Baptist and introduce our best friend to others.

We will turn hearts - if we believe, if our relationship with Christ has seeped down into the marrow of our bones.

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Might we experience what the world calls failure? Well, John was imprisoned and beheaded. Christ has reminded us that the servants should not expect to be treated better than the master was treated. But the joy of knowing Christ through all the good times and the bad grants us peace even in the midst of storms.

How do we make it through the good times and the bad? We know Jesus. And so we announce Jesus. That is probably the easiest thing to forget.

How do we forget? We preach the coming of the Kingdom. But words like “Kingdom” are connected to very concrete images in our minds.

But ultimately, Jesus is the Kingdom. Jesus is the Good News. When we preach the Kingdom, it is not capitalism or communism or socialism or any economic system. It is the person of Jesus. It is not monarchy or oligarchy or democracy or republic or dictatorship or any governmental system. It is the person of Jesus.

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To prepare a world in need of the savior – we announce the savior. We share the Person of Jesus – who IS the Kingdom, the Good News, the Gospel.

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And this is not about waiting until we know Him better. We always need to know Him better. That is why we have Advent for ourselves; so that we may draw closer to Our Lord and prepare more and more for His coming.

In the meantime – we DO know Jesus. And we can share the Jesus we know with others. Advent is for them as well. John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord in those who heard him. We can do that as well.