

Cycle B 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent  
Sunday December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017

On the second Sunday of Advent we always hear an account of the mission of John the Baptist. The mission of John the Baptist is to, **“Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight His paths.”** John was getting the people of His time ready for the coming of the public mission of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

John the Baptist appeared in the desert. The desert symbolizes and shows a detachment from the pleasures and distractions of the world. The people of Israel, Elijah, and the religious of the Early Church would spend time in the desert so as to draw closer to; and encounter the mystery of God. Jesus Christ even spent 40 days in the desert preparing for the beginning of His public ministry. John’s clothing of camel’s hair and leather belt, and his diet of locusts and wild honey signified that he was a desert prophet just like Elijah.

The baptism that John offered was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People responded to his preaching and went out to him and received this baptism of repentance. This repentance was meant to signify a change of heart, mind, and behavior. In short people wanted to enter back into a right relationship with the Lord.

John’s baptism ought to move us to recall our own sacramental baptism and the baptismal graces that we have received. These baptismal graces include:

death to the old-self, purification, regeneration, and a new birth in the Holy Spirit. We have died with Christ and rose with Him to new life. In baptism we have become a new creation in Christ. We have received the white garment of Christian dignity in Holy Baptism.

The reality after baptism though; is that because of fallen human nature we are prone to sin. And, so we do. It is because of this very real human condition that the preaching of John the Baptist is as relevant today as it was over 2000 years ago. John's preaching was getting people ready for the first coming of the Messiah. Today, John's preaching is preparing us for the second coming of the Messiah Jesus Christ when He returns in all His glory. How does John tell us to prepare for the return of Jesus Christ? One word, **"Repent"** We repent by confessing our sins. After sacramental baptism the way we experience forgiveness of sins is through sacramental confession. Yes, the Holy Eucharist does forgive venial sins, but only sacramental confession can forgive mortal sins. But, it is also important for our own spiritual growth to confess our venial sins. Going to confession is an encounter with Jesus Christ. The priest is simply the instrument to help us draw closer to Christ and to become detached from sin.

The mission of John the Baptist is to, **"Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight His paths."** May we repent and be properly prepared for the return of Jesus Christ.

