

FATHER MARK SCHULTE
HOMILY
Second Sunday Advent (C)
December 8, 2024

“Prepare the Way”

As we began Advent last Sunday we emphasized the importance of repentance during this sacred season. On this second Sunday of Advent John the Baptist is introduced in his role as precursor of the Messiah with a mission to prepare people for the Messiah's appearance. John is the fulfillment of the words of Isaiah the prophet: “Make ready the way of the Lord. Clear Him a straight path” (Is 40:3-5). In other words believers are to make every effort to prepare a way for Christ that He may enter into their life. Remove those obstacles in your life that can hinder Christ from coming to you in a more profound way (Lk 3:1-6).

John was specially chosen by God for His mission. John not only proclaimed the necessity of preparedness he also embodied the qualities necessary for his task:

John was humble – He said, “I am not worthy to untie His sandals,” and “He must increase, I must decrease” (Jn 1:27, 3:30-31).

John practiced austerity – He resided in the desert, a place of harshness, eating honey and locust, wearing animal skins. No fancy clothing (Mt 3:4).

John was courageous – He stood up to the corrupt religious and civil leaders of the day, calling them a brood of vipers, essentially children of the devil. He would eventually suffer martyrdom at the hands of King Herod (Mk 6:14-11:30).

John was faithful – He pursued his mission to the very end, preparing the people by word and example.

John was miraculously conceived in the womb of the elderly Elizabeth, the cousin of the Blessed Virgin Mary, placing him in the esteemed company of Jesus and Mary both of whom were miraculously conceived (Lk 1:5-25). The Virgin Mary was miraculously conceived in the womb of her Mother Anne – who was barren up until that time. This is referred to as the Immaculate Conception, because she was conceived without original sin, thus preparing her to be the Mother of God, the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Jesus was miraculously conceived in the virginal womb of his Mother Mary by the over shadowing of the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:35).

God chose these families that were related to each other, Zechariah and Elizabeth, St. Joachim and St. Anne, Mary and Joseph, to be part of His divine plan of salvation (Lk 1:39). Does God have a special plan for your own families? He certainly does.

John the Baptist was specially prepared by God to fulfill the mission that was given to him. Each one of us as baptized Christians are called to imitate John in his actions and in his characteristics. We call upon ourselves and those around us to prepare to receive Christ into our lives. We do this in a way that does not call attention to ourselves, but we instead permit Christ to shine forth as a beckoning call to others. We can do this by taking to ourselves the characteristics of John the Baptist, through our own humility. We are only instruments in the hands of Jesus.

And through our austere way of life that clears our minds for the task ahead. We are courageous in the face of a world that often opposes Jesus and His Gospel message. We remain always faithful, *semper fī*, toward the Christian mission that Jesus has entrusted to us. Like John the Baptist, we are the eyes, hands, ears, and voice crying out in the wilderness, calling everyone to prepare for the coming of Jesus Christ.

Today, December 8th, is also the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (CCC 484-511). Mary holds the highest place in God's celestial court, even above John the Baptist, of whom Jesus proclaimed to be the greatest born of woman. Mary was prepared by God to be the Mother of the Messiah. No one cooperated more completely in God's plan of salvation than the Blessed Virgin Mary. If we imitate the mission and personal characteristics of John the Baptist, then we should also echo Mary's response to the Angel Gabriel, "Let it be done to me as you have said," when God comes to us with our own special mission to carry out (Lk 1:38).

The Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary is followed closely on December 12th by the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patron saint of the Americas. The month of December is full of very significant spiritual events. Let us take every opportunity to familiarize ourselves with them and contemplate how they impact the lives of our families.

NOTE: CCC = Catechism of the Catholic Church