

Sunday Message

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE WORD

Year A • 4 December 2022 • Psalter Week 2



DESERT EXPERIENCE

(MATTHEW 3:1-12)

It was an extraordinary sight that bewildered the religious leaders. Here were good people, respectable people, people from Jerusalem and Judaea and all the surrounding countryside, heading out into the desert to listen to a preacher and confess their sins.

It might be understandable enough if this preacher were part of the religious establishment, a priest or Pharisee, a respectable man, but he was not. He was the opposite of an establishment figure. There was something different, even unpleasant, about him. His clothes were made of camel hair. He ate locusts and wild honey. He had the look of a wild man, the sort of person you would keep a million miles away from. Yet the people went out to see him in their thousands.

And it's not as if his message was cuddly and heartwarming. He was no politician telling people what they wanted to hear. Instead, his words were challenging and uncompromising. He used strong language. He told his listeners to repent, reform, turn their lives around and become new people. He told them to get ready for the coming of the reign of God.

The extraordinary thing is that people welcomed it rather than being put off by this tough talk. They journeyed out into the inhospitable desert to listen to him. They stepped forward to confess their sins and be baptised in the Jordan. They saw that, unlike other religious leaders, John spoke with authority. They saw that this desert prophet wasn't interested in promoting himself or feathering his own nest but only in pointing people towards God.

And so they took his message on board. They listened to him. They heeded him. They confessed their sins, were baptised and sought to turn their lives around.

John's uncompromising message is directed to each one of us individually also. We must wake up, repent, and change whatever in our lives needs changing so as to be ready for Christ's coming. ■

REFLECT

In 2018 in a parish in west Cork, I attended the wake of a local man. His wife had died only eleven weeks before him. She was a Limerick woman, and even though she had been out of the county for more than half a century, she had always remained a keen fan of the Limerick hurling team.

Two years earlier, she was diagnosed with terminal cancer. The cancer got worse in the spring and summer of 2018, but Limerick's progress in the hurling championship helped keep her going. She even managed to get to the All-Ireland final and then to the celebrations in Limerick afterwards. Her daughter showed

me a photograph of her mother holding the Liam MacCarthy cup over her head, a beatific smile on her face.

Less than three weeks later, she was dead. She lived to see the unexpected glory. You could say she had waited to see Limerick's unlikely victory.

Advent is the great season of waiting. We are waiting for the coming of the Lord at Christmas. We are waiting expectantly for his coming.

Advent is about two different comings of Jesus. The first refers to his birth as our

DO

Read today's Gospel slowly. Picture the scene. Imagine you are there. How would you have responded to the words of John? How do you respond today?

PRAY

Pray for your local parish community and Christians everywhere that they will have the courage to change whatever needs changing so as to be ready spiritually for Christmas.

SAY

Lord, help me to turn towards you. Strengthen me to serve you every day of my life. Amen.

LEARN

The Christian is always aware of the importance of repentance.

The Christian turns towards God every day.

Think about what it is you are waiting for this Advent.

Saviour over two thousand years ago. The second refers to his future return in glory at the end of time. It is only from the Fourth Sunday of Advent that the coming of the Christ-child at Christmas moves into centre stage.

This season is a reminder to prepare not just to welcome the Lord at Christmas but for an even more wondrous coming – of the Lord at the end time. Advent challenges us to consider how we are preparing for the Lord's arrival. What is it we are waiting for? Are we living day to day in such a way that he will find us ready when he comes? ■

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,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 11:1-10

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

A shoot springs from the stock of Jesse,
a scion thrusts from his roots:
on him the spirit of the Lord rests,
a spirit of wisdom and insight,
a spirit of counsel and power,
a spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the
Lord.

(The fear of the Lord is his breath.)
He does not judge by appearances,
he gives no verdict of hearsay,
but judges the wretched with integrity,
and with equity gives a verdict for the poor of
the land.

His word is a rod that strikes the ruthless;
his sentences bring death to the wicked.

Integrity is the loincloth round his waist,
faithfulness the belt about his hips.

The wolf lives with the lamb,
the panther lies down with the kid,
calf and lion cub feed together
with a little boy to lead them.

The cow and the bear make friends,
their young lie down together.
The lion eats straw like the ox.

The infant plays over the cobra's hole;
into the viper's lair
the young child puts his hand.

They do no hurt, no harm,
on all my holy mountain,
for the country is filled with the knowledge of
the Lord

as the waters swell the sea.
That day, the root of Jesse
shall stand as signal to the peoples.
It will be sought out by the nations
and its home will be glorious.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 71

Response:

In his days justice shall flourish
and peace till the moon fails.

1. O God, give your judgement to the king,
to a king's son your justice,
that he may judge your people in justice
and your poor in right judgement. (R.)

2. In his days justice shall flourish
and peace till the moon fails.
He shall rule from sea to sea,
from the Great River to earth's bounds. (R.)

3. For he shall save the poor when they cry
and the needy who are helpless.
He will have pity on the weak
and save the lives of the poor. (R.)

4. May his name be blessed for ever
and endure like the sun.
Every tribe shall be blessed in him,
all nations bless his name. (R.)

SECOND READING

Romans 15:4-9

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Romans.

Everything that was written long ago in the
scriptures was meant to teach us something
about hope from the examples scripture
gives of how people who did not give up
were helped by God. And may he who helps
us when we refuse to give up, help you all
to be tolerant with each other, following the
example of Christ Jesus, so that united in
mind and voice you may give glory to the
God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It can only be to God's glory, then, for you
to treat each other in the same friendly way
as Christ treated you. The reason Christ
became the servant of circumcised Jews was
not only so that God could faithfully carry out
the promises made to the patriarchs, it was
also to get the pagans to give glory to God
for his mercy, as scripture says in one place:
For this I shall praise you among the pagans
and sing your name.

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

Matthew 3:1-12

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Matthew.

In due course John the Baptist appeared;
he preached in the wilderness of Judaea
and this was his message: "Repent, for the
kingdom of heaven is close at hand." This
was the man the prophet Isaiah spoke of
when he said:

A voice cries in the wilderness:

Prepare a way for the Lord,
make his paths straight.

The man John wore a garment made of
camel-hair with a leather belt round his
waist, and his food was locusts and wild
honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judaea and
the whole Jordan district made their way to
him, and as they were baptised by him in
the river Jordan they confessed their sins.

But when he saw a number of Pharisees and
Sadducees coming for baptism he said to
them, "Brood of vipers, who warned you to
fly from the retribution that is coming? But if
you are repentant, produce the appropriate
fruit, and do not presume to tell yourselves,
'We have Abraham for our father,' because, I
tell you, God can raise children for Abraham
from these stones. Even now the axe is laid
to the roots of the trees, so that any tree
which fails to produce good fruit will be cut
down and thrown on the fire. I baptise you
in water for repentance, but the one who
follows me is more powerful than I am,
and I am not fit to carry his sandals; he will
baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His
winnowing-fan is in his hand; he will clear his
threshing-floor and gather his wheat into the

barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that
will never go out."

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.