

DECEMBER 4, 2016



SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT



ISAIAH 11:1-10

PSALM 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17

ROMANS 15:4-9

MATTHEW 3:1-12

REFLECTION

The central character in today's Gospel reading is quite an interesting person. John the Baptist preaches in the desert with a sense of urgency. He emphatically offers a heightened warning to "repent as the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" Advent preparation gives us, of course, the opportunity to get ready for Christ's Second Coming. Who is John the Baptist? We know from Scripture that he is Jesus' second cousin, the son of Mary's cousin Elizabeth. When both women were pregnant, Mary visited Elizabeth. When Mary greeted Elizabeth, John leapt in Elizabeth's womb (see Luke 1:41). John was the first to testify to the Christ, the savior. See how John is described as an adult: his clothing is made from camel's hair, he ate bugs and honey to survive, and he spent his time in the desert away from civilization preaching a message of repentance. John is surely not a member of the religious establishment of the day! Yet, he is the one who paves the way for the Christ (savior) to begin his public ministry. John speaks truth to the power of God. Imagine what the Pharisees and Sadducees were thinking when he calls them a "brood of vipers!" (Matthew 3:7). He is so radical for his day (as well as for today), yet his message is profound. It is a message that we would do well to heed to today. The Kingdom of Heaven is indeed at hand, although not yet fully complete, and we have the excellent opportunity to examine our own lives, repent for our missteps, and turn toward the One to whom the Forerunner (a name given to John in Eastern Christianity) speaks of: Jesus Christ.

ACTION

Advent offers us a great opportunity to be reconciled with God and one another. These weeks of preparation leading up to Christmas are the perfect time to listen to John the Baptist and celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Check and see if your local parish has a communal Reconciliation service with individual confessions scheduled during Advent. Make this a part of your Advent preparations. Attend a service and be reconciled with our forgiving God and each other.



JOURNALING QUESTIONS



● Imagine that you were to run into John the Baptist. Journal about how you envision that encounter taking place. How would you respond to the message that John is preaching?