

Theme of the Week - Peace

In last week's Gospel, we hear Jesus tells us to 'Stay awake'. Jesus told us to be prepared and in this week's Gospel, we hear something very similar from John the Baptist. Our lives are in the hands of a merciful God and John resonates the same message of 'prepare a way for the Lord'. In the 2nd week of Advent, we again have to remind ourselves; our lives are busy, chaotic, and manic with lots of things to do but we must prepare a place for the Lord.

Isaiah (remember some call the Christmas prophet) in the first reading writes as the people of Israel go back to their homelands after exile. There is a feeling that something good and magnificent is about to happen and that the entire landscape will change to accommodate this coming. A voice cries, *'Prepare in the wilderness a way for the Lord. Make a straight highway for our God across the desert...then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all mankind shall see it; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken'*. In Sunday's Gospel, John the Baptist proclaims the coming of the Messiah.

Both the readings from Isaiah and the Gospel of Mark describe the image of making a path straight for the Lord. For us we can use this message for our own lives. If we take our minds back to the Vineyard used by Jesus in the Gospel a few weeks ago to grow fruit. In order to grow in a Vineyard we must prepare the vineyard, make it level, take out any weeds that might exist, care for the soil we are about to sow seeds into and keep the rows straight so we can pick the harvest. This is the same for our lives; we must prepare ourselves for the seed of Jesus' Word in our lives. By listening to the word with close attention and living it out as intended we can harvest the Good News.

The Gospel begins by talking about good news, what is the good news it refers to? Jesus is the Good News, God's Son coming into the world. And in order to fully understand the Good News we must prepare for it. Last week there was reference to waiting and excited expectation for a given event; John the Baptist was God's messenger and he dedicated his whole life to one thing, "preparing the way for the Lord", he was sent to tell the people to change their ways and to turn back to God. He told them to make a fresh start by asking for forgiveness and to lead lives filled with goodness and love. Last week we remember that Jesus could return at any time, now we are being asked to prepare also, to make a space in our hearts for God, allowing time for prayer and thinking about God and the great work of Jesus.

We can prepare ourselves just as people did in the time of John the Baptist, by putting right what is wrong in our lives and living as Jesus taught us. Advent is a good time to look carefully at ourselves and to make a fresh start if we need to. What are you sorry for? What might you ask forgiveness for? In this second week of Advent, continue to prepare for the coming of Christ but also reflect on when we have got things wrong. Ask for forgiveness from God so we too can greet the Lord with a loving heart.

Peace

Weekly Reflections
10th December 2023



A reading from the Gospel of St Mark (1:1-8)

The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah:

Look, I am going to send my messenger before you; he will prepare your way.

A voice cries in the wilderness:

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

And so it was that John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. All Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins. John wore a garment of camel-skin, and he lived on locusts and wild honey.

In the course of his preaching he said, 'Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.'

Prayer for the Week

God our Peace, make us watchful and keep us faithful as we await the coming of your Son our Lord; that, when he shall appear, he may not find us sleeping but active in his service and joyful in his praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Saint of the week - Maria Di Rosa

15th December



Her early education was at the convent of the Visitation Sisters, but after her mother's death, she left school and worked in her father's spinning mill. Here she took notice of the poor and the working conditions around her. She made an effort to improve the living and working conditions of the female employees. When a cholera epidemic swept Brescia, she tended the ill at a local hospital. She founded a school for the deaf and later established a religious order. Maria was:

Loving and Compassionate

Day 1

Why do you think Advent is a good time to think about our lives and examining what we do right and what we can improve on?

How in this season of Advent can you reflect on your mistakes or where you may have made wrong decisions?

How can you ensure the decisions you choose now are the right ones?

Day 2

John the Baptist tells us to make the path straight for Jesus. Why do you think he uses this example in order to prepare for Jesus?

What Good News do you think he refers to?

Day 3

In this second week of Advent, how has your preparation for Christ gone so far?

Remember it's not too late, can you make any changes in your life as to welcome Jesus more fully?