

HOMILY 2ND SUN ADVENT YRB 2017

Prepare ye the way of the Lord.
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Today we encounter John the Baptist in the Gospel reading as we do each Advent. He is God's messenger. He tells us: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." We want to spend some time during Advent getting rid of the bumps and pot holes in our lives that stand between us and God. He calls us to repentant. Repentance is more than regretting the past. It is about having a change of heart, a new beginning keeping with God's will.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is one vehicle for repentance. We will be having our Livonia Penance Services this week. We will have one Monday at 7:00 at St. Collette and one Hioon Saturday at St. Genevieve at 1:00. This will include individual confession and absolution. I have confessions here every Saturday from 3:30 to 4:30. If you have not been to confession in a long time, tell the priest and he will walk you through it. There is not a lot of structure. Tell the priest how long it has been since you have been to confession, tell him your sins. You should discuss any serious issues or things that are troubling you. You will get a penance that is frequently prayer. Then you say an act of contrition. At the Reconciliation Services we say this together so you do not have to repeat it individually. If you come to confession to me, I have a card with the payer on it that you can read, so you do not have to have it memorized. Then the priest will give you absolution. There are benefits to receiving the sacrament. It forces you to examine your conscience and naming the things you have done wrong is the first step to changing your life. It is also a safe place to discuss your life with a priest. In 14 years of hearing confessions I think I have heard everything so I will not be shocked, nor am I likely to remember it later. The priest cannot discuss anything you talked about in confession, even with you unless you bring it up with the priest. You will also receive the graces of the sacrament.

Sin always separates us from God because we are not doing his will. It is important to stay connected with God. One way to do this is to attend Mass each weekend. Our lives are so busy and this will connect you with God at least once per week. You hear the word of God and in the homily the priest tries to give you something helpful for you to think about or live in your life. You receive the Eucharist that nourishes you spiritually for the week. You also have the opportunity to connect with a Catholic community that can support you spiritually. If you are not attending Mass regularly, start.

Daily personal prayer is also important in staying connected with God. There are many forms of prayer and all of them are good. Pick the form of prayer that is fruitful for you. I am going to suggest just one today called the examen. It is an Ignatian form of prayer. These are the steps suggested by Fr. James Martin:

THE EXAMEN IN FIVE STEPS. Before you begin, remind yourself that you are in God's presence.

1. Gratitude: Recall anything from the day for which you are especially grateful, and give thanks.
2. Review: Recall the events of the day, from the start to finish, noticing where you felt God's presence, and where you accepted or turned away from any invitations to grow in love.
3. Sorrow: Recall any actions for which you are sorry.
4. Forgiveness: Ask for God's forgiveness. Decide whether you want to reconcile with anyone you have hurt.
5. Grace: Ask God for the grace you need for the next day and an ability to see God's presence more clearly.

Taken from *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything* by James Martin, SJ, pages 95-97.

If you do the examen every day it does not have to take a long time, 5 or 10 minutes may be enough. It will help you to keep your life on track. If you want the steps you can pull up a copy of my homily on the web site. I will also put it in my bulleting article next week. These are three ways you can prepare spiritually for Christmas. Three things you can do to prepare the way for the Lord, Reconciliation, Mass and personal prayer.