

HOMILY ~ SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 7/8, 2024

John the Baptist is one of the interesting figures of salvation history, and it is natural for us to visualize him as an eccentric yet charismatic person. With his camel skin clothing, long hair and beard, he would have had to have a powerful message to stir the hearts of those who gathered to listen to him preach. We cannot see him or feel the power in his voice, but we have heard his words as they are recorded in the Scriptures.

In fact, we have heard many of the stories from the Scriptures so often it is easy for us to not pay attention to how they are speaking to us today. This means we are missing out on God's revelation of himself, and we are missing out on how to apply his words to our lives. We just do not understand that the words of Scriptures are a clear way to measure our faithfulness to live as God intended.

So today, the Church gives us John the Baptist as the central figure to teach us something about our own relationship with God. There is one particular verse in today's Gospel that should cause us to examine our own response to God's plan for our life. Luke tells us, *"The Word of God came to John in the desert."*

Did you ever wonder what John was doing in the desert in the first place? Before he uttered a word about Jesus as the promised Messiah, John went into the desert to listen to God. Only after God revealed how his plan of salvation was to be fulfilled in Jesus did John begin to proclaim that salvation was at hand.

How does John listening and responding to God speaking to him apply to you or me? The key to respond to what God desires for us is found in our taking the time to listening to God speak to us, just as he did to John. You and I are part of God's plan to make the great gift of God, Jesus, known to the world. Yes, us. You and I are called to be prophets in the same manner John the Baptist was called.

Frightening, isn't it? – **we are called to be prophets!**

By now, you are internally dismissing your call to be a prophet as totally unrealistic. The truth is that we all too easily dismiss our part in proclaiming Jesus to others. That is precisely the reason why we, like John, should be listening to God speak to us. We are so busy listening to everyone and everything else that we have failed to live our Baptism anointing of being priest, prophet and king.

During our Baptism, you and I were anointed by the spirit as prophets called to live as a member of his body sharing everlasting life. Our Baptism anointing equipped us to proclaim the love of God and share the story of salvation with others. That is the call of a prophet, and prophets must only speak what they hear God telling them. The Gospel we hear today questions how well we are living our prophetic call.

God will clearly speak to us during our daily prayer if we take the time to listen to him. This means we must have a personal and private life of prayer. Our prayer life should be modeled after that of John and Jesus, who always found a quiet place and listened to God speaking to their hearts. Jesus made it clear that he only did what the Father told him – ***“All the things I have made known to you I have heard from my Father”*** (Jn. 15:15). Jesus was also clear that we are to be his witnesses.

That is why listening to God speak to our hearts is fundamental to doing his will instead of doing our own thing. If we are not listening to God, then we are listening to the world, our own flesh or the devil. None of those things will lead us to glorify God or allow us to be effective prophets.

Part of our prayer life should have us reading and listening to God in the Scriptures. It is there that we will find all we need for everlasting life. It is in the pages of the Scriptures that we will discover the depth of God’s love and the meaning of salvation. The Holy Spirit will make our hearts burn within us, as the Scriptures are opened for us (Lk. 24:32). When that happens, we will embrace the reality of Jesus and find our voice as John found his. The more we listen to God speaking to us in the Scriptures, the more we are going to be effective prophets preparing hearts to hunger for Christ.

John was in the desert listening to God. Where do we find ourselves each day? Are we in front of the TV? Are we off doing busy work for the Lord? Are we entertaining ourselves with games or other activities? We do so many things, which in themselves are not bad or sinful things. There are other things we do that can be *“considered as good things for others or ourselves,”* but if we have not taken the time to listen to God – the good things we do will never help us in leading those we serve to embrace Christ. That is why Christ said, *“Many will say they did all this in my name, but I will say out of my sight, I never knew you”* (Mt. 7:22-23).

Brothers and sisters, if we do not listen to discern God’s will before we do anything, we are doing our will and not God’s. How can we proclaim the good news to others if our own measure of following Christ is by our good works or by how well we follow the rules?

Advent is a gift of the Church to challenge us to reflect. Not to reflect on how satisfied we are with all the good we do, all the inspirational programs we attend or how we serve others. No, it is a time to reflect on how well we are preparing the way of the Lord. How can we prepare the way if we are not listening to God before we go out to do his will?

Peace,
Deacon Don