

Commentary to the Second Sunday of Advent: Preparing for the Lord



We have to remind ourselves continually that it is for this that we are preparing. All the beautiful traditions that are unique to Christmas: the cards, gifts, carols, and shows, are just reflections of the deep celebration we share when we are united to the One who is both one of us and the Second Person of the Divine Trinity.

In today's Gospel we have a solemn presentation of the establishment of the Kingdom of God. In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas,

Something major is going to be presented, something that has to be seen in its historical context. It would begin with the preaching of John the Baptist:

the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert. John went throughout the whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins,

The passage from Isaiah is quoted: John was that voice crying out in the desert: "Prepare the way of the Lord"?

John called out to the people of his time who longed for the Messiah. He is also calling out to people of all time who experience the desperation and darkness of a world that rejects God, and yet, the joy and light in those who accept Jesus Christ. John is calling us to prepare, prepare ourselves, prepare our children, and prepare the world for its Savior.

We prepare ourselves by rooting out the darkness of our lives. That is why we go to confession during Advent. We want to clean the house for company, Special Company, the Presence of the Lord. Many say special prayers during Advent. The Advent Wreath is really a prayer meant for families before dinner. Many spend a little extra time reading scripture. Might I suggest that you reflect on Isaiah 9 & 11.

We prepare our children by teaching them the Christmas story, the real story of the birth of a child in utter poverty, in a smelly stable. We tell them about the proclamation of the angels, the joy of the shepherds and the determination of the wise men. I always feel that families should have two different types of Nativity sets, a nice one for display, and a special one for the children for their touching and playing.

St. Francis of Assisi is credited with constructing the first Nativity scene. I am convinced that the saint of poverty wanted to show the world that true riches are found in the Love of God, the Love of the Holy Family and the Love of holy families, families united to the Lord. As you teach your children about the birth, let them know that Christmas is about God's Love, not about materialism. One little custom you might want to incorporate into your family is to keep the manger empty until the children are ready to go to bed on Christmas eve. Then have the children put the baby Jesus in the manger and lead the family in singing "Silent Night"

We prepare the world for its Savior by emphasizing the reason for the celebration. This is Christmas. Don't say, "Happy Holidays: or "Season Greetings" say, "Merry Christmas" Invite family and friends to join you at Mass on Christmas. And when you come to Church and see many whom you do not normally see at Mass, welcome them warmly. Let them know that we want them to be here. There are many people who come back to a regular practice of the faith after being welcomed on Christmas. This is because others, you, prepared the way for them to let Christ into their lives.

We are in preparations mode, preparing not just for the many beautiful facets of the celebration but preparing for the Lord. May our valleys be filled and our mountains and hills be leveled, may our winding roads be made straight, and the rough ways of our lives be made smooth, so that the Messiah may rush into our lives unimpeded. And may we see the salvation of our God, for, indeed, the very name Jesus means God Saves.

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