

Second Sunday of Advent

GOSPEL – MATTHEW 11:2-11

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’ This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said: *‘The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”’*

Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our ancestor”; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

‘I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing-floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.’



REFLECTIONS

Many come to John for baptism, and he calls for repentance, conversion of heart at the deepest level, a radical turning to God. They must prepare for Jesus, who is coming soon.

Today, there are new signs of God's urgent call for conversion of heart. Pope Francis, in his 'On Care for Our Common Home' (*Laudato Si*) echoes words of Pope John Paul II: We need an 'ecological conversion,' to lead us towards better care for the created world, and for those who are poorest and most vulnerable.

“Ecological conversion...is the radical change of mind and heart that leads to a deeper love and respect for all creatures as having their own integrity before God: it involves change to a sustainable lifestyle, to sustainable patterns of production and consumption, and to sustainable economic and political choices.

This movement of ecological conversion involves people from all kinds of religious backgrounds. In spite of the obvious human limitation and sinfulness, this movement can be understood as a new form of global spirituality, and in Christian terms, a work of the Holy Spirit....We Christians are called to humbly stand with others who may have been involved with care for the Earth long before us. But we do this from our own perspective, that of faith in the God revealed in Jesus Christ, and this God's love for all Earth's creatures.”

(Denis Edwards, Jesus and the Natural World: Exploring a Christian Approach to Ecology, Mulgrave: Garratt Publishing, 2002, 4

FOR THINKING AND TALKING

1. From your reading, what words, phrases, questions or observations 'stay' with you?
2. What could 'conversion of heart' mean for you this Advent?
3. Following his predecessors, Pope Francis calls for an urgent 'ecological conversion', that must lead to more active caring for the earth and for the poor who are most impacted by environmental damage. How can you respond, in the short and long term?

YES I CAN WAIT

Time and Space
I can pause a while
savour the moment
be with you a while
be mindful of what I'm doing...

Take my time to hammer a nail
measure a length
saw a piece of wood
read the rain gauge
wheel out the rubbish bin
explore a thousand fonts
personalise a birthday card
make way for a shopping cart in
all the haste...

(Noel Davis, Together At the Edge: Trust Me, Page 160)

SUCH FRAGILE SANCTUARIES

Go for a walk with God
sometimes.
Don't leave it too long.
Open out to all that's about
as you wander along the way.

Chat away...
be silent...
listen...
as you take the way that draws
you.

Reverence all you meet along
the way
and give thanks for life
life so resilient and expressive
and we such fragile sanctuaries.

(Noel Davis, Together At The Edge: Trust Me, page 23)

BE STILL

Allow 5-10 minutes for this time of stillness and prayer. You may wish to light a candle.

1. Sit with feet flat on the ground, back straight, body relaxed. Concentrate your attention on what you can feel in your body. Don't think.
2. When you feel more relaxed begin to repeat these words to yourself, as a way of meeting God in awareness of your own body and surroundings: **'In God I live and move and have my being'**.
3. Ask God's Spirit to be with you for the rest of today, or next day... In Christian belief it is God's Spirit who prays in us. Through stillness we can become more aware of this truth and join ourselves more wholeheartedly with God.

(Adapted from Gerard W. Hughes, Cry of Wonder, London: Bloomsbury, 2014, xi)

CLOSING PRAYER

God of Life and Peace

as never before in history,

our common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning.

Let ours be a time of

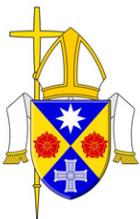
awakening to a new reverence for life,

the firm resolve to achieve sustainability,

the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace,

and the joyful celebration of life. Amen.

(Based on The Earth Charter and Pope Francis, "On Care for Our Common Home," Laudato Si, paragraph 207)



Prepared for Advent 2016 by: Adult Faith Education Sandhurst, PO Box 201, Bendigo, 3552. Email: adultfaith@sandhurst.catholic.org.au. Resources: Prayer based on Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 2016, par 244. Reflection from: Dennis Edwards, *Jesus and the World*, Mulgrave: Garratt Publishing, Vic, 2002. Poetry with permission from: Noel Davis, *The Heart Waking and Breaking into Dance*, Lifeflow Education, 2007. Noel Davis, *Together At the Edge: Trust Me*, Lifeflow Education, 2011. Lifeflow Education contact: 73A Eastaway Ave, Narooma NSW 2546. 'Phone: 02 4476 3831 Email: patricianoel@iinet.net.au. 'Be Still' adapted from Gerard W. Hughes, *Cry of Wonder*, London: Bloomsbury, 2014, xi. Photograph: Paul Barber, Sandhurst Diocese Pilgrimage 2016, *Journey of Christ*. Used with permission.