

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT YEAR A

THEME: **ADVENT: A TIME FOR SPIRITUAL REVIVAL**

Repent... Prepare... Make straight... These are the key words with which John the Baptist initiates us into the second week of Advent. Last Sunday we considered Advent as an opportunity for a fresh start; a time to begin again, a time of restoration to a life of grace.

What a providential moment to begin a new relationship with God and our neighbors; or to deepen our relationships; or to restore broken ones. We need spiritual revival because in truth, there is no 'blanket salvation'. Simply trusting in God's promise alone is not enough because according to St James, faith without good works is dead (James 2: 17).

As baptized Christians, we are expected to live a life worthy of our Christian vocation. John the Baptist practiced what he preached. He lived a life of simplicity; wore clothing of Camel's hair, fed on locust and wild honey and claimed insignificance, identifying himself simply as a voice of one in the desert. Because of this, his life and message were very effective. People came from Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan repenting from their sins in preparation for the coming Messiah.

Like John the Baptist, we have our Rev. brothers, sisters and priests who have answered God's call to preach the Good News. They have made a conscious choice to lead lives totally focused on serving God and his people. Their examples, whether it be ministering in our parishes, in foreign missions, running soup kitchens, or offering pastoral care to the sick and imprisoned, has inspired many of us to lead God-centered lives. Those who went to Catholic school may recall the guidance, encouragement, and prayers of a special sister or brother. Along with our parents, these persons were instrumental in helping us form a lasting relationship with God.

Next weekend in our diocese, we will remember our retired priests, sisters and brothers in the Retirement Collection. Across the nation, there are more than 30,000 sisters, brothers, and priests in religious orders who are 70 years and above. In our own diocese, 95 of our priests are now senior priests. Many of these selfless women and men continue to minister – sometimes into their 80s and 90s, doing whatever they can to help the people of God. Others are frail and in need of assistance.

So, my dear friends in Christ, as we do second collection for them, I ask you to be as generous as you can. I also ask for your prayers for them. Know that women and men religious, as well as our diocesan priests, are exceedingly grateful for every dollar shared and that they pray for you constantly.

As we continue with the season of Advent, let us continue to strive for the radical conversion that will make our lives pleasing to God.