

Connecting with the Sunday Readings

Second Sunday of Advent Gospel Word
Matthew 3:1–12

In today's Gospel reading, Matthew describes John the Baptizer as wearing camel hair clothing, and a leather belt, and eating strange food. You've probably read that Gospel and thought: "strange clothes, odd diet." But John's clothing links John to the prophets who preached against injustice and pressed for the need to have a transformed society. John's clothing is a clue that he too will preach about a reign of justice and the need to reform one's life and heart. Repentance is needed for his baptism, and producing good fruits will be a sign of that repentance. John provides a *contrast* to Jesus. He drew attention to the presence of evil and sin. He called for people to mend their ways and to prepare for the one who would come next. In a way, John was like the opening act of God's great entrance into history. For some it is tempting to stay put with the words of John the Baptist and focus on sin and repentance. That is only the first step. In Jesus, God shows us how to live as his children and how to bring about a reign of justice and faithfulness where the spirit of wisdom and harmony will sprout and grow as was proclaimed in today's first reading.

-by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Living the Word

Read all of today's readings with an eye to the human longing for peace and harmony among nations, within communities and in our own hearts. Are there situations in your life where you long for peace and harmony? During this season we send and receive cards that echo the wish: "Peace on Earth." Most of us have heard or seen the saying: "If you want peace, work for justice." In today's first reading, the people of the Old Testament longed for a Messiah who would bring a peace which was more than an end to war. In the Letter to the Romans, Paul urges the community to live in harmony with the kind of acceptance as Christ's. It is our responsibility to live in the spirit of Christ Jesus. Just societies and communities are peaceful ones. Sometimes we think of justice as an overwhelming concept. In a world where so few have so much, and so many do not have enough, it can be overwhelming. We wonder "What can I do? Can one person make a difference?" The essence of justice is to live in right relationships. How we live our lives in relationship to others and ourselves, determines the growth or decline of justice. This week look at the relationships closest to you and examine how they are working. Are they just? Is there any behavior you need to reform or change to contribute to peace on earth?

One-line Prayer

God of justice, quiet us during this time of year that we may look at our relationships and practice justice in all of them. Amen.