

Connecting with the Sunday Readings

Second Sunday of
Advent

Gospel Word
Luke 3:1-6

What would Advent be without a nod to John the Baptist? He is the one who preached repentance for the coming of the Messiah. He had a purpose, an urgent one. He asked people to change themselves. His message is timeless. It is true in every century and for every Advent. Change your attitudes and behaviors. Empty yourself. The actual word for *repent* in the original Greek is *metanoia*. It means to “turn around” or “change yourself.” It implies some kind of conversion or interior change. It’s helpful to think of this as the changing of attitudes or mindsets so that behavior changes.

Luke lets us know when John the Baptizer traveled throughout the region around the River Jordan. Since it was during the time of the Roman Emperor, Caesar, the governor Pontius Pilate, and the local tetrarchs Herod and Philip who were brothers, and the Jewish officials who reported to the Roman authorities, Luke’s account suggests that John’s preaching of repentance and conversion occurred around AD 29. John baptized those who were willing to change and embrace a new life as they waited for the coming of the Messiah. Jesus’ baptism was a sign of repentance much different from Christian Baptism.

Living the Word

John’s call to repent refers to an interior “cleaning up.” Perhaps we need to rid ourselves of the way we hold onto our successes and failures; the way we build up our egos; the way we rule out any need for other people in our lives; the way we want more than we need and go after it, whether it is money or material goods. During this season we empty ourselves so that Christ may grow in us.

Is there someone whom you think you will *never* forgive? Part of our emptying is of resentments. We blame others. We dwell resentfully on those who have wronged or hurt us. As long as we withhold forgiveness, we miss out on loving relationships. Being forgiven by God implies that we forgive others. Baptism not only forgives our sin, it also gives us the power to forgive others. When we forgive, the path to God is made straight; the ups and downs of traveling through valleys of bitterness and resentment and over hills of selfishness and arrogance will be smoothed out. In that sense, Advent is a time for us to forgive one another so that the abundance of God’s forgiveness and peace will be ours at Christmas.

One-line Prayer

God of mercy and forgiveness,
empty us of resentments and
give us forgiving hearts. Amen.