

December 6, 2020

2nd Sunday of Advent

Have the courage to be the voice

“Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. A voice of one crying out in the desert: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.” – Mark 1:2-3

Throughout salvation history, the Jews were awaiting the promised Messiah. Prophets foretold of the one that was to come. Often the people didn't recognize the signs, or simply didn't listen. Like TV or radio commercials, maybe they'd heard about this coming for many years, even centuries, and they just tuned it out. After you've heard the message a few times, it can become tired or ineffective.

This weekend we read in the first verses of Mark's Gospel of a very interesting man named John the Baptist. He was dressed in clothing made out of camel's hair and ate locusts and wild honey. John was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, who proclaimed, “Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; A voice crying out in the desert, ‘prepare the way of the Lord.’”

John was different. He wasn't a Pharisee or a temple official. He was someone living in the wilderness and preaching to those who he encountered or anyone that would listen for that matter. He didn't

have to go out looking for people. The scripture tells that they came to see him from the Judean countryside and from Jerusalem. John was a larger than life figure in his day. And his message was the need for repentance and that one greater than him is coming – one who would baptize the people with the Holy Spirit.

Why would he appear like this – in the desert? After all, wouldn't he have been more effective in reaching a larger audience in town and with a more normal looking appearance? Maybe because God didn't want it that way. In today's world, we can get lost by the many messages on social and electronic media. Maybe this is God calling us to cut through all the misinformation and just listen to Him. The prophets foretold what was to come, and yet most didn't listen, and many today still don't.

We may not be dressed like John the Baptist or eat his diet, but we can be that voice crying out in today's wilderness and inviting others to know the Lord. Have the courage to proclaim the good news at home, work, school, and in the community.”

- Bishop Gregory Parkes