

*2nd Sunday of Advent*

*The Colour of Compassion*



## *In the beginning.....*

Mark's "good news" begins with John the Baptist: a voice cries in the wilderness ....prepare....make straight...**repent**.

John did not come from the civil or religious establishment but from the fringes, the desert, the wilderness, the outback, and the message they heard challenged existing power structures to "repent" and to act justly. Only in this way could they recognise the one to was to come.

In this 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent ponder the readings from :

1. Isaiah 40:1-5. 9-11.
2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter of St. Peter 3:8-14
3. Mark 1:1-8

## *Now.....*

Mark's invitation to us is to repent. Repentance means changing what needs to be changed, straightening what has become crooked and doing away with the exploitation of the powerless.

Personally – in our neighbourhood and in our Church –

Who/What is being exploited?

Is there one small step we can take to address this exploitation?

## *And for you....*

We meet the God of Advent in the areas of our daily lives that call us to repentance.

Read the article "The Rich Meaning of Christmas". What does Christmas mean to you?

## *Catherine's Word on Compassion:*

*"There are things that the poor prize more highly than gold, tho' they cost the donor nothing; among these are the kind word, the gentle, compassionate look, and the patient hearing of their sorrows".*

# The Rich Meaning of Christmas

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What does Christmas mean? Christmas is like a perfectly-cut diamond twirling in the sun, giving off an array of sparkles. Here are just some of its meanings:

- A four-year-old child woke up one night frightened, convinced that there were all kinds of spooks and monsters in her room. In terror she fled to her parents' bedroom. Her mother took her back to her room and, after soothing her fears, assured her that it was safe there: "You don't need to be afraid. After I leave, you won't be alone in the room. God will be here with you!" "I know that God will be here," the child protested, "but I need someone in this room who has some skin." The word was made flesh and dwelt among us. John 1, 14
- God is not found in monasteries, but in our homes. Wherever you find husband and wife, that's where you find God; wherever children and petty cares and cooking and arguments and reconciliation are, that's where God is too. The God I'm telling about, the domestic one, not the monastic one, that's the real God. Nikos Kazantzakis
- Every year of life waxes and wanes. Every stage of life comes and goes. Every facet of life is born and then dies. Every good moment is doomed to become only a memory. Every perfect period of living slips through our fingers and disappears. Every hope dims and every possibility turns eventually to dry clay. Until Christmas comes again. Then we are called at the deepest, most subconscious, least cognizant level to begin to live again. Christmas brings us all back to the crib of life to start over again: aware of what has gone before, conscious that nothing can last, but full of hope that this time, finally, we can learn what it takes to live well, grow to full stature of soul and spirit, and get it right. Joan Chittister
- After a mother has smiled for a long time at her child, the child will begin to smile back; she has awakened love in its heart, and in awakening love in its heart, she awakes also recognition. In the same way, God awakes Himself before us as love. Love radiates from God and instills the light of love in our hearts. Hans Urs Von Balthasar
- At Christmas, through his grace-filled birth, God says to the world: "I am there. I am with you. I am your life. ... Do not be afraid to be happy. For ever since I wept, joy is the standard of living that is really more suitable than the anxiety and grief of those who think they have no hope. ... This reality, this incomparable wonder of my almighty love, I have sheltered safely in the cold stable of your world. I am there. I no longer go away from this world. Even if you do not see me. I am there. It is Christmas. Light the candles! They have more right to exist than all the darkness. It is Christmas. Christmas lasts forever." Karl Rahner
- Even at Christmas, when halos are pre-tested by focus groups for inclusion in mass market campaigns, they are hard to see. ... This is how halos are seen, by looking up into largeness, by tucking smallness into folds of infinity. I do not know this by contemplating shimmering trees. Rather there was a woman, busy at the Christmas table, and I looked up to catch a rim of radiance etching her face, to notice curves of light sliding along her shape. She out-glowed the candles. All the noise of the room left my ears and silence sharpened my sight. When this happens, I do not get overly excited. I merely allow love to be renewed, for that is the mission of haloes, the reason they are given to us. ... But when haloes fade, they do not

abruptly vanish, abandoning us to the lesser light. They recede, as Gabriel departed from Mary, leaving us pregnant. John Shea.

- Some of the Church Fathers compared Jesus to a singer with a strong voice and a perfect pitch who joins a discordant choir and completely transforms it. It is not that Jesus gave us a different set of songs to sing, but helped us instead to perform our standard repertoire in an entirely new and more beautiful way. Richard McBrien
- The incarnation does not mean that God saves us from the pains of this life. It means that God-is-with-us. For the Christian, just as for everyone else, there will be cold, lonely seasons, seasons of sickness, seasons of frustration, and a season within which we will die. Christmas does not give us a ladder to climb out of the human condition. It gives us a drill that lets us burrow into heart of everything that is and, there, find it shimmering with divinity. Avery Dulles
- Looking for God these days requires the willingness to investigate the small. Aztec Poem.

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