

The dominant voice on the first Sunday of Advent was: "**Watch**"; that of today is "**Repent.**" The people of Jerusalem made their way to John, as they were baptized by him in the river Jordan and they confessed their sins.

Advent is the conviction that God's salvific coming is real; It will only be Christmas if our heart lives in grace and peace with God. In the meantime we continue our preparation for the coming of Jesus, remembering with deep gratitude God's great love for us. "**God so loved the world that he sent his only Son...**" "**And the Word was made flesh, [took on our weak and fragile human nature] and came to live among us.**"

- ❖ The First Reading speaks about filling in valleys, smoothing out mountains and hills, transforming cliffs into plains, and ridges into valleys. In other words, removing all the obstacles that get in the way of our meeting with Jesus. (we must remove our sins) Then "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all mankind shall see it".

That is also our role as Christians. Through what we say and do, others can come to know Jesus. So many people we know face many obstacles in getting to know the real Jesus (And, to be honest, sometimes we ourselves are those obstacles).

- ❖ Peter, in today's 2nd Reading, tells us that a "day" with the Lord can be a 1,000 years. This is probably directed at those who thought (and perhaps feared)

that the Lord was coming soon. And if the end of the world seems so slow in coming, it is to give people time to mend their ways, to redirect their lives. At the same time, he also warns that the coming can be very sudden, as we all know is very true. We all know people who have been taken away from us very suddenly, without warning.

Saint Peter says **“that the Lord will find you at peace”**. The coming of the Lord does not fill his friends with fear and anxiety but rather with a kind of joyful anticipation of one friend to another. The fruit of everyday living the Way of Jesus is a real interior peace that makes us ready to meet him at any time.

Let us reflect at this time on what changes we should make in our own lives, not just now but in the year that is to come. What kind of person would I like to be? What kind of person should I be? What kind of person do I think God would like me to be? Do you point others to Jesus Christ in the way you live, speak, and treat others?

- ❖ Today we meet John the Baptist as he sets the stage for Jesus' coming. John taught people, bluntly made them aware of their sinfulness and called on them to **“Repent”**. **“Repent”** here does not mean just being sorry for the past. It is a call for them to do much more than that, to change their ways. To “repent” in the Gospel involves a radical transformation in our way of living. It means a conversion, a real turning around, a re-directing of one's whole life. **A conversion is not a superficial change but a profound renewal.** We need to make radical

decisions! A change of situation is not enough. We need decisions that are the result of a new approach to life, a new way of loving.

- ❖ Are we ready to straighten the paths for our Lord this Advent? Could I make this the time for a truer, more searching confession in my life? John called for sincerity —sincerity with oneself— and abandonment to God's mercy. In doing so he helped people to live for God, to understand that living is a matter of fighting to open up the paths of virtue and letting God's grace vivify their soul with his joy.

So, there are two wonderful ways to prepare for Christmas:

- Personal conversion.
 - What better present could I give myself?
- Leading someone else to know and experience the love of Jesus.
 - What better present could I give to another person?
- ❖ Pope Francis says that Advent is a time to let go of the worldly distractions that take us away from God, and focus on growing closer to him through prayer and concern for others. It is a time given to us 'to welcome the Lord who comes to meet us, to verify our desire for God.'

It is so joyful because we do not have to wait for the Kingdom of God sometime in the future - we can experience some of its beauty and joy here on earth, but

the condition to experiencing God's kingdom - both on earth and in heaven - is **conversion**.

Be converted every day, one step forward every day,”

We should convert and prepare the way of the Lord in our hearts by examining our consciences and leaving behind the “convenient but misleading...idols of this world: success at all costs, the power at the expense of the weak, the thirst for wealth, pleasure at any price.”

“Christmas is a day of great joy, also exterior, but is primarily a religious event for which spiritual preparation is needed,”

“In this Advent season, let us be guided by the exhortation of John the Baptist: ‘**Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.**’”

Welcoming our Lord this Christmas season, we **grow** in holiness and **act** with a heart full of the compassion that this Christmas season may bring to us.