

Missionary Commentary

Second Sunday of Advent
December 8, 2024

Sunday Readings

Baruch 5:1-9
Psalm 126:1-6
Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11
Luke 3:1-6

[USCCB Link to the Readings](#)

Becoming Heralds of the Word

An excellent model for us in our mission of preparing the way for the Messiah is none other than John the Baptist. During the Advent season, an exploration into the significance of John's witness can renew our dedication to persevere as evangelizers, committed heralds of the Word, God's own Word Incarnate. Six aspects of John's life capture our attention and reflection.

Receiving God's Call. John, the name means "Yahweh is gracious," received his specific vocation to herald God's Word. The unique role that he will play in the unfolding of God's loving plan of salvation is described by Zechariah in his Benedictus prophecy: "You, little child, ... will go before the Lord ... to give his people knowledge of salvation" (Lk 1:76-77). Yes, here is a statement of John's mission, but it is also a challenging description of the Christian vocation to be an evangelizer.

Godly Life-style. Recorded by all synoptic gospels, John appears in the desert of Judah (Mt 3:1-12; Mk 1:4-8; Lk 3:1-9). Along with his announcement of the kingdom, John practices an exemplary life-style. As Christians we realize that our witness of life is the first dimension of genuine evangelization. To inspire people and attract them to Jesus, to the Church, to deeper faith, we begin by examining—and possibly changing—our life-style.

Doubts and Darkness. John the Baptist consistently remained faithful to his God-given vocation and an exemplary life-style. Yet, none of us know the extent of the temptations that bombarded his soul—in the desert and even in prison. John was not spared the trials and temptations, even the darkness and despair, of the courageous disciple, one who heralds the Messiah.

Privileged Precursor. The Baptist faced a challenging vocation, an austere life-style, and disturbing doubts. Considering all the challenges and demands, was it worth the sacrifice? We hear John respond: Absolutely! It is a great, unique privilege to prepare the pathway of the Messiah. Friends, bear witness! It is not drudgery or demanding duty; it is positively a privilege!

Inviting Others, Challenging Others. John gathered a circle of disciples; yet, he did not seek to "possess" them; he readily sent them to Jesus to inquire about His messiahship (Mt 11:2-6; Lk 7:18-23). Scripture exegetes believe that many of John's

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disciples would later have become Jesus' disciples. John's ministry—all genuine ministry—has one direction and focus: the person of Jesus.

Faithful Witness. The Baptist lived his commitment radically and with finality. Jesus said that “history has not known a man born of woman greater than John” (cf. Mt 11:11; Lk 7:28). As a true prophet, he ultimately bore witness through a martyr's death. We all know that fire can only be lit by someone or something that is already on fire itself. We personally ask ourselves: Am I aflame? Am I on fire?

Conclusion. During our Advent journey, we can look to the Baptist to guide us to a more authentic witness to Christ, God's Word made flesh!

Notes on the Sunday Readings

First Reading

Baruch 5:1-9—Written in the second century before Christ, this reading from the prophet Baruch retells the story of the Exile to give us spiritual lessons. Jerusalem is instructed to dress up and welcome all her children who are returning in joy and glory.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 126:1-6 — Psalm 126 expresses the happiness of the returning exiles; they joyfully proclaim: “The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.”

Second Reading

Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11 — This is Paul's “Epistle of Joy,” his loveliest letter. Because the day of Jesus Christ is ahead, we are asked to live as the Lord's ideal followers—right up to the day of Christ's arrival.

Gospel

Luke: 3:1-6 — Today's Gospel is drawn from Saint Luke, our special evangelist for this year. He situates John the Baptist in history and describes how John in the desert prepared for the Lord's arrival—extending the same invitation to each of us.

Notes and Commentary by Maryknoller James H. Kroeger, author of the recent books [Walking with Pope Francis: The Official Documents in Everyday Language](#) (Orbis Books – 2023) and [Exploring Vatican II Treasures: Actors, Events, Insights](#), commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the close of Vatican II [1965-2025] (Faith Alive Books – 2024)

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