

Second Sunday of Advent December 5, 2021

**God has commanded
that every lofty mountain
be made low.**

— *Baruch 5:7*

A DEEP CHANGE OF HEART

When John proclaimed a baptism of repentance, as today's Gospel relates, he called people to a deep change of heart. For John the Baptist, repentance was not simply regret for past failings, but a commitment to orient life around God's desires and purposes. What might living in alignment with God's desires look like? Our readings offer some clues. Baruch indicates that when mercy and justice are embraced like a royal garment, we may see the fruits of repentance. Paul notes how the Holy Spirit has been active within the church in Philippi, forming them to live in a loving and united community of faith, so they may witness to the love of God. And John himself suggests that a repentant heart clears a path for God to enter, leveling the mountains and valleys of our resistance, so that God might dwell within.

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PRAYER OF THE WEEK

Second Sunday of Advent
Almighty and merciful God,
may no earthly undertaking hinder those
who set out in haste to meet your Son,
but may our learning of heavenly wisdom
gain us admittance to his company.
Who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Reflection question:

What earthly undertakings do I need to set aside so that I can set out to meet God's Son?

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READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Monday: Is 35:1-10; Ps 85:9-14; Lk 5:17-26
Tuesday: Is 40:1-11; Ps 96:1-3, 10ac, 11-13; Mt 18:12-14
Wednesday: Gn 3:9-15, 20; Ps 98:1-4; Eph 1:3-6, 11-12; Lk 1:26-38
Thursday: Is 41:13-20; Ps 145:1, 9-13ab; Mt 11:11-15
Friday: Is 48:17-19; Ps 1:1-4, 6; Mt 11:16-19
Saturday: Sir 48:1-4, 9-11; Ps 80: 2ac, 3b, 15-16, 18-19; Mt 17:9a, 10-13
Sunday: Zep 3:14-18a; Is 12:2-3, 4, 5-6; Phil 4:4-7; Lk 3:10-18

SAINTS AND SPECIAL OBSERVANCES

Sunday: Second Sunday of Advent
Monday: St. Nicholas
Tuesday: St. Ambrose
Wednesday: The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Thursday: St. Juan Diego
Friday: Our Lady of Loreto
Saturday: St. Damasus I

Our Current Parish Mass Schedule:

St. Philip, *Occidental*: 8am & 11:15am Sun.; 9am Wed. & Fri.
St. Teresa, *Bodega*: 5pm Sat.; 9:30am Sun.; 9am Tues. & Thurs.
Note: Please wear a mask in church. Thank you.

Finance Corner: Your generosity is greatly needed and appreciated! For the month of **October** offerings: PLEASE put in Mass collection box or mail to St. Philip/St. Teresa Parish, P. O. Box 339, Occidental CA 95465. Or donate at our website www.stphilipstteresa.org via Paypal or card. Please include your offering envelope # [if you have one] with your donation. Bless you!



11/21: 1st coll: \$1330. 2nd coll: \$71. 11/28: 1st coll: \$1563. 2nd coll: \$2303.
12/5: no 2nd collection. 12/8: Immaculate Conception.
12/12: RETIREMENT FUND FOR RELIGIOUS.

Mark your Calendar for Future Events & Meetings:

Parish Council [PC]: TBA
Finance Council [FC]: TBA
Liturgy Committee [LC]: TBA
St. Teresa Ladies Guild: Contact Diane, 823-6044
St. Philip Ladies Guild: Contact Penny, 559-367-7403

✠ ♥ ✠ Mass Intentions ✠ ♥ ✠ Schedule

12/4 Sat.	5pm Mass ✠	Bill Cummings
12/5 Sun.	8am Mass ✠	Denis & Josephine Poynter
12/5 Sun.	9:30am Mass ✠	Lodavico & Sabina Del Curto/Del Curto family
12/5 Sun.	11:15am Mass	for the People
12/8 Wed.	9am Mass ✠	Jimmy Mooney
12/11 Sat.	5pm Mass ✠	Brendan Smith
12/12 Sun.	8am Mass ✠	Emily & Joe Palmer
12/12 Sun.	9:30am Mass ✠	Lodavico & Sabina Del Curto/Del Curto family
12/12 Sun.	11:15am Mass	for the People

Prayer Requests: Please leave a message at 707-408-2650.

Teresa K., Pat K., Thomas T., Susan B., Lorri McC., Sarah, Clifford J., Terri A., Fred P., Theresa S., Sara, Mary Anne P., Barbara, Dave C., Jim P., William, Parson P., Dave, Mary O., Bill Z., Daniel, Sally T., Michael D., Richard M., Kathleen, Peter, Rosa S., Susan B., Joyce D., Anita C., George H., Mimi H., Steve, Barry, Lorrin K., Hugh P., Robert S., Britney N., Chuck, Rebecca A., April K., Jacinta G., Leo A., Ed C. family, Kathy R., Donna W., Jim K., Sherry S., Gail F., Marie N., Christine, James G., Gary S., Peter R., Gerry N., Diane K., River M.; Nikkie; Mr. C., Michelle, Christian A., Samantha S., Gary E.

Mission Santa Clara de Asís (link)



(the California missions are featured in our current bulletins)

Parish memo: The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available on Tues. (12/14) and Wed. (12/15), at church after the 9am Mass (for about an hour or so, starting at 9:30am).

RURAL FOOD PROGRAM UPDATE for November 2021

Heavy rain and wind did not deter our dedicated volunteers from providing bags and bags of proteins, cheeses, fresh milk, eggs and warm socks at this month's Rural Food distribution. On Tuesday, November 9, 54 families (138 individuals) received nutritional support during our distribution at the St Philips Parking lot and parish hall. Star Child sign-ups were completed for our traditional December distribution of toys, clothes or gift certificates for children in the parish. In December, we will continue our tradition of providing each family with enough blankets, scarves or hats for each member of the family.

If you are aware of a family which needs nutritional assistance, please let them know about our program. Leave a message at the parish office, (707) 408-2650 to get a call back with additional information.

This program is funded through monthly Rural Food Collection, private donations and the dedicated, awesome volunteers. **Thank you for your generous donations as we strive to meet the nutritional needs of all attendees at our food distributions.**

RURAL FOOD VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES in the Parish Hall and parking area: **Saturday, December 11, 9-10:00am** repackaging; **Monday, December 13, 9:00 – 11:00am** set up and **Tuesday, December 14, 7:30 – 11:00am** to distribute food to clients.



Treasure Hunt

In my day every boy scout, even a tenderfoot like myself, had to learn how to use a compass. To insure our capacity to use this instrument effectively our scout leaders used to send us off individually on what was called a treasure hunt. In my case, I was taken to a fairly level stretch of Pennypacker Woods and given a compass and set of instructions directing me first to advance 150 paces north northeast where I would find a small envelope pinned to a tree. Finding it, I found instructions enclosed directing me to walk 100 paces southeast where I found a small box with further instructions – namely to walk 70 paces due west - and so on through many twists and turns until I came out of the woods precisely where I had entered. And there my scoutmaster awaited to award me my prize: a splendid compass of my very own. I must add, however, that as evening fell the woods around us echoed with the fading cries of other boys who had not read their

compasses correctly and were never heard from again – ours being a very strict troop that had little patience for incompetent tenderfoots. Or tenderfeet?

Which makes me think: is not every Mass we attend a kind of treasure hunt? As our Liturgy begins, are we not all thrust back into Old Testament times as our starting point to experience (by way of the first lectionary reading) one or another of those signals given by God or an angel to ancient Israel – orienting us (as it did them) toward a Promised Land not far off? And having assimilated those Old Testament signals do we not then advance to find (by way of the second lectionary reading) bits and pieces of letters from St. Paul or some other apostle offering us further spiritual orientation – in the light of which do we not then advance to find a Gospel reading upon our path offering us an even more proximate sense of something wonderful ahead?

Consider, for example, this first week of Advent's liturgical treasure hunt where (thanks to its first reading) we stumble upon a note telling us "the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill a promise" – to make things sprout – like Springtime . . . like a rebirth, a resurrection, a blossoming of the human race! Thence we will advance but a few paces – guided by the compass of our liturgy – and come upon (perhaps stuck in the lower branch of a tree) a message left by St. Paul: reinforcing the promise of that first note, giving you instructions on how to handle what lies ahead: to "rev up" your capacity for love which the promise will expect of you.

Placing that note in your mental knapsack you will advance again but perhaps a score of feet when a third note will catch you eye (and ear) – a not entirely comforting note because, while it confirms the promise of the notes you have collected, it would warn you to brace yourself – because when that promise is fulfilled it will shake up your world in ways that may dismay you – saying things like: it will shake the heavens and the earth, snap you out of your spiritual drowsiness, surprise you like a trap – in other words; love will become your modus operandi – demanding - until you begin to love love. And so it will go throughout Advent and indeed the whole liturgical year – a perpetual treasure hunt with the liturgical readings as your compass - its orientations popping up from Sunday to Sunday. Leading where? To the promise you seek - the placing of that bread in your hand every Sunday whose nutrition, unlike the stuff you usually feed on, is inexhaustible and incremental

--Geoff Wood, 11/28/2021



[Click image link](#) to request a prayer from the Marian Sisters

The Second Sunday of Advent

reflection by Fr. Thomas Hoisington



"A voice of one crying out in the desert"

In the Gospel Reading we hear St. John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus. In other words, John is preparing others to receive Jesus for who Jesus is, which is no small task. The beginning of the Gospel passage situates John's ministry in a specific worldly context, explaining what sort of men were leaders of the world into which the Messiah had come. These pagan and Jewish leaders were corrupt. This is why Saint Luke the Evangelist mentions them: to tell us that John—and the Lord after him—had an up-hill battle before them.

John the Baptist himself is the "hinge" or "pivot" between the Old and New Testaments. In the texts that describe him, he appears as one who foreshadows the coming of the Messiah. We might ask, though, why it is that John also happens to be the cousin of Jesus. Is this familial relationship a mere historical co-incidence?

Regardless, the Gospel accounts make clear that for two persons who were related, John the Baptist and Jesus were very different persons. They were both criticized, but for opposite reasons: Jesus for being a drunkard, and John for being ascetical. At times it seems that the only thing these cousins have in common is that they were unjustly persecuted. What were John and Jesus really about, then?

Both an openness to and care for others mark the kingdom of the Messiah, its King, and its herald. These qualities also mark the lives of those invited to His Table. The kingdom that Jesus was sent to establish is not one which seeks to conquer other nations. Instead, it's one which invites children gathered from the east and west to share in God's splendor. Each of us as a member of Christ's Mystical Body—the Church—shares in the missionary command given to the Church. So then, we should consider during Advent who it is that we ought to be inviting to share in the riches of the Christian life.

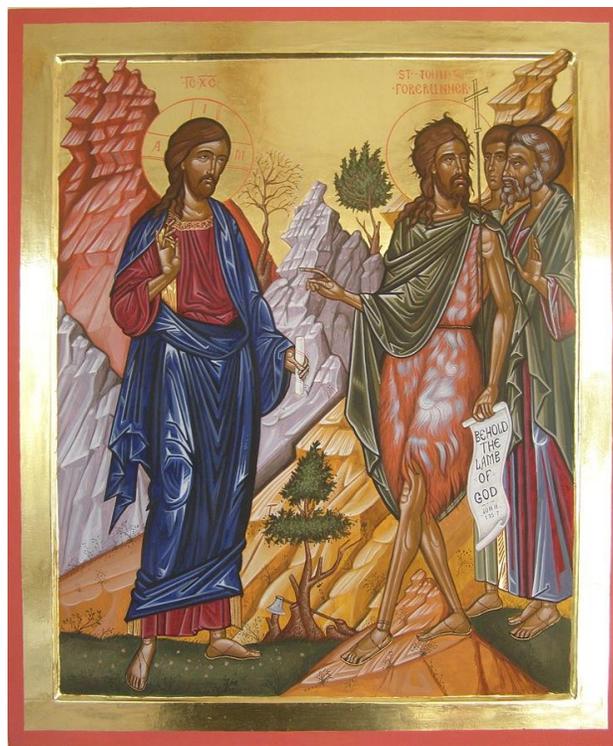
It might not be who we think. If John the Baptist were to appear on our doorstep, it's likely that we would want nothing to do with him. Our reluctance might be because of his appearance. But more than likely it would be because as we hear John described in the Gospel, we notice that he tells everyone like it is. When he speaks of sinners, he points out their sins. When he speaks of Christ, he points and shouts, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

In preparing for the birth of the Messiah, we give thanks that Jesus was born 2000 years ago in order to die for us. His death is what we celebrate when we come before the altar to share in the Sacrifice of His life for us. If a Christian devoutly receives that life in Holy Communion, she will have the strength to seek out others in order to serve them, whether or not she believes that they deserve her love and service.

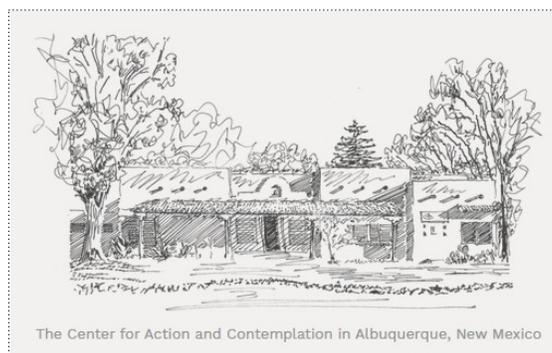
It is not safe to think or act this way, of course. In fact, the Christian life is not only a narrow path, but a dangerous one as well. If our love is to increase more and more, as Saint Paul urges us in the Second Reading, we must be willing to embrace those

whom we do not care for, or even—in our own minds—consider part of God's plan. We must do so by remembering that we ourselves were once far from the Lord, and that He has done great things for us. There may be many persons in our lives whom we dislike, but our dislike is no reason to think that God loves them any less, or that Christ became human to save us, but not them.

God did all that He could for each of us in sending His Son to become human and die for us on the Cross. Yet choosing to respect our free will, the Lord will not save us from evil in spite of ourselves. He allows us to bring evil into our lives if we so wish. Each one of us, like God, is called to share in His work of saving others. As with God, there is only so much each of us can do for others, but there certainly is something we can do.



"There is a deep relationship between the inner revolution of prayer and the transformation of social structures and social consciousness. Our hope lies in the fact that meditation is going to change the society that we live in, just as it has changed us."



The Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico

-Father [RICHARD ROHR](#) (link)