

December 7, 2025
2nd Sunday of Advent
Matthew 3:1-12

In those days John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: "A voice of one crying out in the desert, 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.'" John wore clothing made of camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins.

When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

Background:

This is the second week of the new church year and the second Sunday of Advent. Advent is preparation for the arrival of the reign of God, which begins with God coming into the world through the birth of Jesus, a singularly important event. Times of preparation are both significant and familiar parts of our daily and religious life. Most of us are familiar with the times spent preparing for an important test or even preparing for an important meal. Religiously, many take time to prepare for prayer, or even ponder "reflection questions" before Sunday Mass. In our religious tradition, we are also familiar with the importance of times of preparation. The forty years that the Jews spent in the desert, the time to build the temple, and the forty days that Jesus spent in the desert before his public ministry all point to the importance of and need for a time of preparation.

In today's Gospel, John the Baptist urges people to make time for preparation before the arrival of the longed-for reign of God. Matthew focuses on John as a prophet, a person in the line of prophets of the Hebrew people who tried to help the people see God working in their midst. Thus, John dresses and acts like a traditional prophet, wearing camel hair with a leather belt and eating locusts and wild honey. He is like Samson, Samuel, or Elijah who also spoke of resistance to injustice and looked for social reform.

John understands himself preparing for one whom he is not worthy to even carry his sandals, and one who will clear the threshing floor and gather the wheat into his barn. He also is asking the people to prepare themselves for the arrival of God's reign and the arrival of the Messiah. The repentance he seeks is more than personal, but instead is a social transformation that leads to just relationships being lived throughout the society. In order to emphasize the connection between repentance and changing one's life, John calls the Pharisees and Sadducees a "brood of vipers," understood as offspring of snakes. The Pharisees drew importance from maintaining their ancestral heritage, by faithfully keeping religious traditions. To call them offspring of snakes suggests that their way of life is largely a "show," and challenges them to show "good fruit as evidence of your repentance."

At that time there was great unrest with authority, both civil and religious. Both Rome and the priestly aristocracy of Jerusalem exploited the common person by not confronting the systems that kept most people in need of even the basic necessities for life. Ancestral property was confiscated, and taxes were unaffordably high. The social climate was one of unrest and desire for change. Many gave in to grumbling and complaining. Others looked for a Messiah, someone from the outside, who would bring about the changes for which they

longed. Instead of giving in to grumbling and complaining, John preached repentance in order to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. But John looked for a Messiah who would come with power to change the world order of the day. "I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I." (Matthew 3:11)

The Gospel text that the Church has chosen for this second Sunday of Advent is a challenge to us in this time of Advent. This time of preparation is not just for the celebration of the birth of Jesus, but also for commitment to living in the Kingdom of God that Jesus' birth inaugurated. It calls the church to look beyond individual transformation, to changes in society and our institutions that are needed, and ask what part we might be asked to play in the reality in which each of us lives.

Reflection Questions:

1. When you think about Advent being a time of preparation, what are your memories of times of preparation in your own life?
2. What were some of the feelings that arose within you during such periods?
3. How have times of preparation helped you to be the person you are today? How have those experiences helped you in your spiritual journey?
4. How does today's Gospel fit with the way you have been thinking about the coming of Christmas?
5. What comes to mind as you hear Matthew describing John as being in the desert, eating locusts and wild honey, and preaching repentance?
6. What are some of the things that arise in you as you hear John's message in today's Gospel?
7. By coming out to be baptized, people were publicly admitting their faults. Has there ever been a time when you were willing or even needed to admit your failures?
8. Can you take some time to talk with God about your desire to use this time before Christmas as a time for preparation for the arrival of God and God's reign, or some other hope for God's lived presence in your life or in greater society?

The Gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fscclledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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Excerpts from the readings for December 7, 2025, the Second Sunday of Advent

On that day, a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, a bud shall blossom.
The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and understanding,
a spirit of counsel and strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord.
Not by appearance shall he judge, nor by hearsay, but he shall judge with justice, and decide aright.
Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid;

the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them.
The baby shall play by the cobra's den, and the child lay his hand on the adder's lair.
There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the Lord, as water covers the sea.
On that day, the root of Jesse, set up for the nations, the Gentiles shall seek out.

*Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace forever.
O God, with your judgment endow the king, and with your justice, the king's son;
he shall govern your people with justice and your afflicted ones with judgment.
Justice shall flower in his days, and profound peace, till the moon be no more.
May he rule from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.
For he shall rescue the poor when he cries out, and the afflicted when he has no one to help him.
May his name be blessed forever; as long as the sun his name shall remain.
In him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed; all the nations shall proclaim his happiness.*

Brothers and sisters: Whatever was written previously was written for our instruction,
that by endurance and by the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.
May you think in harmony with one another and Christ Jesus, that you may with one voice glorify God.
Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God.
For Christ became a minister to show God's truthfulness, to confirm the promises to the patriarchs,
and so that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.
As it is written: I will praise you among the Gentiles and sing praises to your name.

John the Baptist appeared in the desert saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"
It was of him that Isaiah had spoken when he said:
A voice of one crying out in the desert, Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.
John wore clothing made of camel's hair, and his food was locusts and wild honey.
At that time, all Judea were going out to be baptized by him in the Jordan River.
When he saw the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said, "You brood of vipers!
Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance.
And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.'
For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones.
Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.
I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I.
I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.
His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will gather his wheat, but the chaff he will burn with fire."

Excerpts from Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17; Romans 15:4-9; and Matthew 3:1-12

Friends,

Here are the Gospel background and reflection questions for December 7th, the Second Sunday of Advent, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. In the Gospel from Matthew, John the Baptist preaches in the desert, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" And the people of the region are baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledge their sins. To the Pharisees and Sadducees, he says, "Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. He will gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

The other readings have additional references to the Spirit resting on the one who will judge with justice, and desire of knowledge of the Lord, and harmony in the fulfillment of God's promises, and preparing the way. In the first reading from Isaiah, "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the shoot from the stump of Jesse. He shall decide aright for the land's afflicted, and there shall be no harm or ruin, for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the Lord, and the root of Jesse shall be set up as a signal for the nations, which the Gentiles shall seek out." Psalm 72 exclaims, "Justice shall flower in his days, and profound peace. May he rule from sea to sea." In the second reading, Paul writes to the Romans, "Whatever was written previously was written for our instruction. May God grant you to think in harmony with one another, and welcome one another, as Christ welcomed you, confirming the promises to the patriarchs."

On this second Sunday of our liturgical year, John the Baptist is given prominence in the Gospel... and he declares that who he is and what he has been doing is as nothing compared to what and who is coming next! *Prepare the way*, to quote the prophet! The one who is coming is unprecedented and beyond comparison—exceptional, mighty, and awesome! According to Isaiah's prophecy in the first reading, "The spirit of the Lord rests upon him: a spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, and strength; a spirit of knowledge, and fear of the Lord." Justice and faithfulness are round about him, and profound peace accompanies him, says the psalmist. "In him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed; all the nations shall proclaim his happiness." Paul rejoins, "By the encouragement of the Scriptures we have hope. In keeping with Christ Jesus, with one voice, glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Joe

> i < May the Word light your way each day!