

2nd Sunday of Advent, Year C

GOSPEL

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In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar's reign, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of the lands of Ituraea and Trachonitis, Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the pontificate of Annas and Caiaphas the word of God came to John son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. He went through the whole Jordan district proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the sayings of the prophet Isaiah:

A voice cries in the wilderness:
Prepare a way for the Lord,
make his paths straight.
Every valley will be filled in,
every mountain and hill be laid low,
winding ways will be straightened
and rough roads made smooth.
And all mankind shall see the salvation of God.

(Luke 3:1-6)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- Luke goes to great lengths to describe the geographical and political world into which Jesus is born. God enters into human history at a specific time and place. The coming of Jesus for the salvation of the world is not a vague notion but a concrete event in time.
- The prophets of the Hebrew tradition were specially chosen people who spoke the word of God to Israel. John the Baptist is sometimes referred to as the last of the great prophets.
- Scholars believe that Jesus may well have spent some time as a disciple of the Baptist before embarking on his own public ministry.
- The 'Herod' mentioned in this text is Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, who ruled at the time of Jesus' birth. After Herod the Great's death, his realm was divided between three of his sons. One son proved an inept ruler and was removed from power in Judaea by the Romans and replaced by a Roman governor.

EXPLORING THE WORD

The word of God that comes to John in the wilderness is not a word meant for him alone but is to be shared with all the people. John's proclamation of the word of God 'through the whole Jordan district' is a precursor to Jesus' instruction to his disciples 'that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations' (Luke 24:47). The salvation brought by the Lord is not a personal and private matter but one that is destined for the whole of humankind. This salvation can only be achieved, however, if one is prepared to realign one's life—to repent of past sins and take a new path in life. John's call is a call to a new beginning.

- What new beginning are you being called to as you undertake your journey to baptism?
- What are the 'sins of the past' that you are called to repent of?
- What 'sins of the past' is all humanity being called upon to repent of in order to make a new beginning?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- 'The word of God came to John.' How did the word of God first come to you?
- Are there paths in your life that need to be made straight, or hills and valleys that need to be levelled, in order to make it easier for the Lord to come to you?
- Who are the prophets of the modern age who call people back to fidelity to God's plan for the world? Are there voices that are raised to warn us to honour the earth and all people? Are there voices that call us to respect creation and to share the bounty of God's gifts more equitably? How does the modern world receive the voices of the prophets of today? What hills need to be levelled and what paths made straight? Share your reflections together.
- This week, try not to get bound up in the 'Christmas cheer' that dominates all around us. Choose instead, this week, to concentrate on the waiting and the preparation for what is to come.
- Today's entrance antiphon is a lovely prayer for this week:

*The Lord will come to save the nations,
and the Lord will make the glory of his voice heard
in the joy of your heart.*

