



FAITH CIRCLES

WEEKLY SMALL GROUP CATECHESIS

2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT • YEAR B

SUNDAY GOSPEL

Preparation through Conversion

MARK 1:1-8

The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah: Look, I am going to send my messenger before you; he will prepare your way. A voice cries in the wilderness: Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight.

And so it was that John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. All Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed



their sins. John wore a garment of camel-skin, and he lived on locusts and wild honey. In the course of his preaching he said, 'Someone is following me, someone who is more

powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.'

A WORD FROM POPE EMIRITUS BENEDICT XVI



This Sunday marks the second stage of the Season of Advent. This period of the liturgical year brings into the limelight the two figures

who played a preeminent role in the preparation for the historic coming of the Lord Jesus: the Virgin Mary and St John the Baptist. Today's text from Mark's Gospel focuses on the latter. Indeed, it describes the personality and mission of the precursor of Christ. Starting with his external appearance, John is presented as a very ascetic figure: he was clothed in camel-skin and his food was locusts and wild honey that he found in the Judaeian desert.

Jesus himself once compared him to the people "in kings' houses" who are "clothed in soft raiment" (Mt 11:8). John the Baptist's style must remind all Christians to opt for a lifestyle of moderation, especially in preparation for the celebration of the Christmas festivity, in which the Lord, as St Paul would say, "though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor 8:9).

With regard to John's mission, it was an extraordinary appeal to conversion: his baptism is connected with an ardent call to a new way of thinking and acting, but above all with the proclamation of God's judgment and by the imminent appearance of the Messiah, described as "he who is

mightier than I", who "will baptize you with the Holy Spirit".

John's appeal therefore goes further and deeper than a lifestyle of moderation: it calls for inner conversion, based on the individual's recognition and confession of his or her sin. While we are preparing for Christmas, it is important that we re-enter ourselves and make a sincere examination of our life. Let us permit ourselves to be illuminated by a ray of light that shines from Bethlehem, the light of the One who is "the Mightiest" who made himself lowly, "the Strongest" who made himself weak.

All four Evangelists describe John the Baptist's preaching with reference to

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a passage from the Prophet Isaiah: “A voice cries: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God’” (Is 40:3). Mark also inserted a citation from another prophet, Malachi, who said: “Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who shall prepare your way” (cf. Mal 3:1).

These references to Hebrew Scriptures envisage a saving intervention of God, who emerges from his hiddenness to judge and to save; it is for this God that the door is to be opened and the way made ready.

Let us entrust to Mary, the Virgin of expectation, our journey towards the Lord who comes, as we continue on

our Advent itinerary in order to prepare our hearts and our lives for the coming of the Emmanuel, God-with-us.

DISCUSS TOGETHER

1. Today’s gospel refers to Jesus as ‘good news’, ‘Son of God’, ‘more powerful than I am’ and one who will ‘baptise you with the Holy Spirit’. Do these statements reflect your experience of him? What phrase would you use to describe Jesus?
2. Reflecting on Pope Benedict’s message, what are the ways in which you could prepare – spiritually, physically, emotionally and with resources, to receive and experience Jesus more deeply into your life?

PRAY TOGETHER

Pray for Each Other

- Invite each member to share an intention for which they would like prayer
- As a group pray out loud for each person in turn

Response

Jesus, help me to turn more fully towards you each day.

Closing Prayer

Jesus, we thank you for sending messengers to prepare us for your coming. In these days of advent give us the courage to turn our hearts and minds towards you that we may live lives ever more devoted to you and your mission. Amen.