

Sunday, December 8 Advent Reflection

Gospel, *Matthew 3:1-12*

In due course John the Baptist appeared; he proclaimed this message in the desert of Judaea, 'Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand.' This was the man spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said: A voice of one that cries in the desert, 'Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight.' This man John wore a garment made of camel-hair with a leather loin-cloth round his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judaea and the whole Jordan district made their way to him, and as they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, they confessed their sins.

But when he saw a number of Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism he said to them, 'Brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming retribution? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance, and do not presume to tell yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father," because, I tell you, God can raise children for Abraham from these stones. Even now the axe is being laid to the root of the trees, so that any tree failing to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire. I baptize you in water for repentance, but the one who comes after me is more powerful than I, and I am not fit 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 in a fire that will never go out.'

In the season of Advent, many of the Mass readings, including the Gospel passage above, foreshadow the coming of Jesus. This particular reading introduces us to John the Baptist, one of my favorite characters from scripture, perhaps due to his very simplistic background. He appears in only a few places in scripture and says few words, but the words he utters are profound. John the Baptist demonstrates great *humility* in the phrase, “. . . but the one who comes after me is more powerful than I, and I am not fit to carry his sandals.”

In this season of Advent, may we all try to focus on our own humility through the example of John the Baptist and through the humble birth of Jesus in a stable.

Have a blessed Advent!

~ submitted by Pat Chitwood

