

“I baptise you in water for repentance, but the one who follows me is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to carry his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

- How self-aware are you of your own abilities and your limitations?
- How would you describe your role in life?
- Where do your gifts dovetail with what God is doing?

“His winnowing-fan is in his hand; he will clear his threshing-floor and gather his wheat into the barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.”

- Is there an aspect of your life that is all mixed up and in need of sorting out?
- What is it that you need to hold onto to, and what do you need to let go of, or dispose of?
- God has a permanent solution for the chaff – why does the “chaff” of your life continually blow back into the floor space of your heart?

Hoping

What do I want to say to the Lord in light of what you have shared or because of what others have shared?

The Gospel always leads us to places of hope, possibility and new beginnings. It awakens us to where and what we should be grateful for. It leads us to where God is waiting and inviting us to grow in freedom, in inner peace and maturity as a disciple. What prayer is in your heart as you draw to a close in this period of prayer?

- For an openness to the will of God in my life
- For the gift of repentance?
- For the willingness to prepare a pathway for God in my life.
- For the awareness not to be wasteful with the world's resources?
- For authenticity in my life.
- For an awareness of the variety of gifts held by everybody.
- For the willingness to declutter my life of that which is only holding me back.

PRAYING WITH THE SUNDAY GOSPEL 2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT – YEAR A MATTHEW 3:1-12

“THE ONE WHO FOLLOWS ME WILL BAPTIZE YOU WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND FIRE”

In due course John the Baptist appeared; he preached in the wilderness of Judaea and this was his message: ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.’ This was the man the prophet Isaiah spoke of when he said:

**A voice cries in the wilderness:
Prepare a way for the Lord,
make his paths straight.**

This man John wore a garment made of camel-hair with a leather belt 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 baptised 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 fly from the retribution that is coming? But if you are repentant, produce the appropriate fruit, and do not presume to tell yourselves, “We have Abraham for our father,” because, I tell you, God can raise children for Abraham from these stones. Even now the axe is laid to the roots of the trees, so that any tree which fails to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire. I baptise you in water for repentance, but the one who follows me is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to carry his sandals; he will baptise 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 the barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.’

Hearing!

"Speak Lord your servants are listening"

Slowly read the Gospel passage; listening carefully to the story. Read it intentionally, so as to perceive the small details we can miss on an initial reading. These small details might be the bridge between the Gospel Story and the story of your life.

- What phrase or word resonated with you in your reading of this text?

Happening

Through the lens of the Gospel we now look with compassion at the story of our lives

Having listened to the text of the Gospel now let it speak to the text of your life story. Become aware of where this Gospel story is already alive in your life or in your community. Or maybe you notice where it is absent in your life? Where might this Gospel story be inviting life and hope into aspects of your life that long for resurrection and new life?

"In due course John the Baptist appeared; he preached in the wilderness of Judaea and this was his message: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.'"

- Do you wait for the right moment as God sees it or do you grow impatient and act as you see fit?
- John preaches in wilderness places – how are you at going to the wild and lonely places in your life or in your relationships?
- At moments when you feel the need to repent do you sense God's closeness and God being close at hand?

"This was the man the prophet Isaiah spoke of when he said: A voice cries in the wilderness: Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight."

- How are you at listening to the promptings of others?
- What might preparing a path for the Lord look like in your life?
- Are there crooked aspects to your life that long to be straightened? That long for an opening of God's way?

"This man John wore a garment made of camel-hair with a leather belt round his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey."

- Do you present in order to conform to the expectations of others or have you the freedom to express your true self and your values?
- John's dress and diet speak of sustainability. What drain does your wardrobe or fridge put on the planet's resources?

"Then Jerusalem and all Judaea and the whole Jordan district made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins."

- Authenticity is working is magic – people are drawn to it. Do you trust your authentic self?
- Is there a journey you need to make in search of repentance and forgiveness?

"But when he saw a number of Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism he said to them, 'Brood of vipers, who warned you to fly from the retribution that is coming?

- John is speaking truth to power – what enables or disables you in speaking truth to power in your life?
- Is there a dynamic in your life that you need to name and verbalise?
- How do you react to hypocrisy?

"But if you are repentant, produce the appropriate fruit, and do not presume to tell yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' because, I tell you, God can raise children for Abraham from these stones."

- Are you personally invested and committed to your faith or do you ride on the backs of those who have gone before you?

"Even now the axe is laid to the roots of the trees, so that any tree which fails to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire."

- What in your life needs to be pruned, or let go of, if you are to bear fruit?