

ST. THOMAS INDIAN MISSION

**Second Sunday of
Advent, Year B
December 06, 2020**

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**Fr. George "of the desert" Decasa
Pastor**

For the time being, our Sunday Masses are held outdoors, by the Parish Hall, on Saturdays at 4:30 PM and on Sundays at 8:30 AM. Please come in a face mask and observe social distancing (6 ft. between people of different households).

**ADVENT IS A TIME FOR
REPENTANCE AND
NEW BEGINNINGS.**



Second Sunday of Advent

**Prepare ye
the Way of
the Lord**

Luke 3:4

1st Reading:

Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7

Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her service is at an end, her guilt is expiated; indeed, she has received from the hand of the LORD double for all her sins. A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God! Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low; the rugged land shall be made a plain, the rough country, a broad valley. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken. Go up on to a high mountain, Zion, herald of glad tidings; cry out at the top of your voice, Jerusalem, herald of good news! Fear not to cry out and say to the cities of Judah: Here is your God! Here comes with power the Lord GOD, who rules by his strong arm; here is his reward with him, his recompense before him. Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs, carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care.

The Word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm:

Response: Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

I will hear what God proclaims; the LORD—for he proclaims peace to his people. Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear him, glory dwelling in our land.

R.

Kindness and truth shall meet; justice and peace shall kiss. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and justice shall look down from heaven.

R.

The LORD himself will give his benefits; our land shall yield its increase. Justice shall walk before him, and prepare the way of his steps.

R.

2nd Reading: 2 Peter 3:8-14

Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day. The Lord does not delay his promise, as some regard "delay," but he is patient with you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a mighty roar and the elements will be dissolved by

fire, and the earth and everything done on it will be found out.

Since everything is to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be, conducting yourselves in holiness and devotion, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved in flames and the elements melted by fire. But according to his promise we await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you await these things, be eager to be found without spot or blemish before him, at peace. ***The Word of the Lord.***

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths: All flesh shall see the salvation of God.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel: Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: *Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. A voice of one crying out in the desert: "Prepare the way of the Lord,*

make straight his paths." John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. John was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. And this is what he proclaimed: "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Acclamation:

Save us, Savior of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection, you have set us free.

REFLECTING ON THE WORD GUIDEPOSTS

PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD!

Isaiah's (first reading) poetic language gives us the framework to prepare for Jesus coming into our lives, whether as an infant at Christmas, in glory at the end of time, or subtly into our hearts when we least expect. What wastelands take up entirely too much of our time and attention? What valleys of neglect need to be filled in? What aspects of ourselves have we built up like mountains that need to be made low? What rugged obstacles have we put in the way so that we don't have to think about how our faith should be guiding us? What parts of ourselves are rough and unfinished? Leveling these bumps and hindrances will prepare us for Jesus' arrival.

In the time of Isaiah, the people of God experienced difficult times and almost lost their faith. They became sinners. Thus when the Lord God expressed his desire to speak to his people through the prophet Isaiah, the latter thought that God would reprimand or punish them. Instead, the words God spoke through the prophet were words of forgiveness: "*COMFORT, give comfort to my people. . . . Speak tenderly to Jerusalem . . . her guilt is expiated. In the desert prepare the way of the Lord. . . . Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God.*" Isaiah thus makes it clear to the people that the coming of the Messiah is an event of great forgiveness, a grand reconciliation between God and man.

The call to prepare the way of the Lord is echoed in today's Gospel. Just before the Lord Jesus came, "*John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*"

The word "repentance" is *metanoia* in Greek, from the verb *metanoiein*, which means "to make an about face." That is to say: If I was the center of my attention before and God only played a supporting role to all my dreams and desires, now it is God who is the center of my attention and all my life is about God's expectations of me. That is REPENTANCE and that is the meaning of internal preparation for Christmas. For us Catholics this internal preparation finds its seal in the Sacrament of Penance/Confession.

Gian Carlo Menotti's beautiful Christmas opera "Amahl and the Night Visitors" tells the story of a poor, crippled shepherd boy who lives with his single mother. They offer hospitality one night to the three magi who are following the miraculous star. When the household falls asleep, Amahl's mother, consumed with worry for her son's future, tries to steal the gold the magi have brought as a gift for the newborn king.

She is, of course, caught in the act; but one of the magi then tells her: "*Woman, you may keep the gold. The child we seek doesn't need our gold. On love, love alone, he will build his kingdom. . . . He will soon walk among us. . . and the keys to his city belong to the poor.*" And the poor mother, deeply moved, cries out: "*Wait . . . Take back your gold! For such a king I've waited all my life.*"

We, too, are waiting for such a king.

GOD'S WAY IS NOT OUR WAY, AND WE TEND TO FORGET THIS.

Our passage from the Second Letter of Peter was addressed to a group of people struggling with problems particular to their own community. They were experiencing doubt; not everything was working out as they had believed it would. They had believed that the Second Coming was very close at hand and fully expected to see the Risen Lord within their lifetime; years passed and it did not happen.

How many of us had held beliefs that we felt were not working out as we thought they should? How many of us have either said or heard it said, "I thought if I had lived a good life I would be spared this misfortune"? Sadly, many people leave the practice of their faith because of disappointment that God has not done things wanted by them.

Some in the early community began to deny belief in the Second Coming just as we deny or ignore our own beliefs if they do not work out as we expect – or if the beliefs do not suit us and the way we choose to live. (It is no secret that many of us ignore our Church's moral teachings because they do not suit us.) Some early Christians had simply lost enthusiasm, and so do we.

Peter's letter addresses the human experience of disappointment and doubt and says, "Wait a minute! We must remember who God is and what He is about. He has been patient with us, but the time is here for Him to have His way. All He wants is what is good for us."

God's way is not our way, and we tend to forget this. For God, one day may be as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

Our readings are reminders that we must let God be God. We must let Him do things God's way, in God's time, the way God sees fit. It is the secret of peace.

Unfortunately, we are so into what we want, how we want it, and that we want it right now, we tend to forget that the life of faith is not about our expectations. It is about God's expectations.

John preached a way of letting God be God: the way of repentance. John's listeners confessed their sin, that they had not been living in a way expected of believers.

We too must confess that we do not always live as God intends. This Advent, are we ready to repent, to give up those things that stand in the way of God's drawing Himself closer to us? We believe that Christ will come again. This belief is the source of great joy, but it also is a caution that we should be getting ready.

WITH HOW YOU ARE PREPARING THE WAY OF THE LORD, WILL HE RECOGNIZE YOU?

A middle-age woman is having a near-death experience in the operating room. She asks God if she is going to die. God says no and explains that she has another 30 or 40 years to live.

With all those bonus years assured, she decides to make the most of them by staying on at the hospital to have an “extreme makeover.” She has a face-lift, liposuction, breast augmentation, and a tummy tuck. She even changes her hair color to platinum blonde. As a “new” woman, she proudly sashays out of the hospital and is struck and killed by a speeding ambulance at the entrance.

At the Pearly Gates, she confronts God and tells him, “I thought you said I had another 30 to 40 years!” God replies, “Sorry, I didn’t recognize you.”

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Celebrant:

Called by John the Baptist to prepare for the coming of the Lord, let us all pray:

Be born in us, O Lord, be born in the world.

Lector:

Let us pray for the church . . . for the social justice ministries of the church and for all those who benefit from these ministries. . . . we pray,

For all the nations of the world . . . for unity where there is division; for dialogue where there is misunderstanding; for generosity where there is self-interest; for a world that is safe for all peoples. . . . we pray,

For those whose lives are threatened . . . for the very poor, the very old, the very young, and those yet to be born . . . for all who live with violence . . . for all whose lives must be protected . . . we pray,

For those who are sick . . . for those who suffer from the COVID-19 virus, for all those who suffer from colds and flu and the ailments of winter . . . for doctors and nurses, therapists and technicians, and all those who participate in the healing ministry of Christ . . . we pray,

For those who have died . . . for those who grieve for someone they love whose absence is especially difficult during this season . . . we pray,

Celebrant:

God our Father, you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus. Fill us with your grace and help us to be heralds of God’s presence in our world. We ask this through Jesus Christ your Son and our Lord. Amen.



Parishioners’ Contributions:

Nov. 21, 2020---Nov. 29, 2020 = \$ 1,771.00
November 2020 Online Giving = \$ 1,410.00

A SECOND COLLECTION WILL BE TAKEN AT OUR MASSES NEXT WEEKEND, DECEMBER 12-13, 2020.

The 2nd collection is for the Retirement Fund for Religious. Please be generous. Help our elders.

In good times and bad, senior Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests have dedicated themselves to service and acts of mercy. Today, they pray for an aching world. Yet years of serving for little or no pay have left their religious communities without enough retirement savings. Your gift to the Retirement Fund for Religious helps provide medications, nursing care, and other necessities. **Envelopes for this collection will be distributed at today’s Mass.**

REMINDERS:

Our St. Thomas Indian Mission 2021 CALENDARS are here. Please take one for your family.

To those with assigned parish contribution envelopes: To facilitate counting and posting of your Sunday contribution, we ask that you:

- a) please use your official parish contribution envelope when you give your contribution;
- b) if you are sending/giving a contribution which is good for some weeks or months, please don’t send the corresponding weekly envelopes in one bunch but send just one contribution envelope containing the total amount;
- c) if you would like that a summary of your 2020 contributions be sent to you sometime in January 2021, you may inform us in advance by writing on one of your contribution envelopes between now and January the words “I need a summary of my 2020 contributions” or similar such info for us.

To all others:

- 1) if you would like to be recognized as contributing financially to the parish, especially if you are doing it regularly, please use a contribution envelope.
- 2) In order to have contribution envelopes carrying your contributor number, the first step is, before Mass you pick up a green envelope found next to the collection basket.
- 3) put in it your contribution.
- 4) write on the envelope your name, address, telephone number, and check the box that says you would like to receive envelopes.
- 5) you drop the envelope in the collection basket.
- 6) After a week or two, Fr. George will give you your numbered contribution envelopes which are good for all the Sundays and solemnities of the current year.

“In the Lord’s eyes, one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years are as a day. The Lord does not delay in keeping his promise . . .” Putting our time-governed goals in the context of God’s timeless plan.

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