

Advent Week 2 (8-14 December 2024)

Acknowledgement of Country

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As we gather this morning, we acknowledge the First Nations peoples of this land.

They were the first to sit and talk to each other here.

They were the first to listen to the wisdom of the Ancestors here.

They were the first to listen deeply to each other and the earth, and so make it part of their way of living, their way of proceeding.

We pay our respects to elders past and present and to those present with us today. We commit to continuing to walk alongside First Peoples in the quest for truth telling, healing and reconciliation.

Context - Less is More

As the second candle on the Advent wreath is lit, we contemplate peace in our lives and in our world.

In his encyclical *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis writes that peace is more than simply an absence of war.

He suggests that inner peace is closely related to care for ecology and the common good because, lived out authentically, it is reflected in a balanced lifestyle together with a capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life. A profound imbalance is caused by the frenetic pace at which we live, exacerbated for many in the lead up to Christmas celebrations.

In Sunday's Gospel we are introduced to John the Baptist who goes into the desert, the wilderness, living simply and preparing the way for Jesus by calling for repentance through baptism.

Scripture

Luke (3:1-6)

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,



'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.

Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

Figure 1: By Pieter Bruegel the Younger - Art Renewal Center, Public Domain, [Advent wreath](https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/249703/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-advent-wreath). / Credit: Shutterstock
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Reflection

by Nadine Grant – Consultant Formation Identity and Outreach

John the Baptist travels through the region of Jordan proclaiming repentance, translated from the Greek word metanoia, which literally means change of mind.

I love that God continually invites us to 'change our minds'. To live differently, better, and more in tune with our earth and each other and as a result with our God.

What we don't hear until next Sunday's Gospel is in the following verses where the tax collectors, soldiers and the crowds question the Baptist, "What shall we do?" or perhaps in our context "how shall we change?"

Australian theologian Brendan Byrne writes that beneath all the Baptist's advice in response to these groups, is the central theme that nothing detaches us more from God than wealth and possessions.

Pope Francis writes of the connection between patterns of wealth and consumption as drivers of the current ecological crisis:

"Much of the ecological crisis stems from the wastefulness and excessive consumption patterns of the wealthy, leaving the poor to struggle with the consequences. This overconsumption threatens our planet and reflects a broader cultural failure to recognize limits - our own and that of the Earth's. "Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life, and encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption"

(Laudato Si' 222).



Image 2: Photograph by Nadine Grant used with permission



Prayer

Contemplation creates an interior space that allows for the recognition of God's eternal love in creation, leading us to a change of heart that also helps us in the change of lifestyles needed to help care for our common home.

You are invited to join us in prayer-

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit , Amen.

May we find some peace and quiet in the lead up to Christmas to consider a disposition of "less is more".

Response: Come, Lord, bringer of peace.

May we find some peace and quiet to contemplate the cosmic symphony of all creatures, celebrating all of creation and its beauty.

Response: Come, Lord, bringer of peace.

We pray for the courage to be open to a change of heart, to be open to doing things differently and to be counter-cultural in a space of over-consumption and waste.

Response: Come, Lord, bringer of peace.

Call to Action

During this season of Advent, we are called to discern the voice of the Creator amongst the frenetic gift buying and sometimes over-indulgence of food and ask ourselves - What are we really worshipping?

Consider the message in the following video: The Mulberry Miracle

https://youtu.be/VilRHLu6K4k?si=W_9f5DqmPUpl5bEV

