

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT; Cycle – A; Dec. 7th 2025
Isaiah 11:1-10; Romans 15:4-9; Matthew 3:1-12

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

The Jewish people believed that before the Messiah would appear in history to rule over the people, Elijah, the great Old Testament Prophet, should return to prepare the people to welcome the Lord. This prediction that Elijah will come before the Messiah is found in Malachi 4:5-6, which states that God will send Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord. This prophecy is also referenced in the New Testament, particularly in Matthew 11:14 and Matthew 17:10-13, where Jesus identifies John the Baptist as the fulfillment of this prophecy, means, he is Elijah. As John is the forerunner of the Messiah, on the Second Sunday of Advent the Church draws our attention to the message of John the Baptist who tried to prepare the hearts of people to welcome the Messiah.

People were enthusiastic to listen to John as he appeared like a great Prophet. The reason was that there was not a Prophet in Israel for 400 years and people were yearning to hear a prophet speak. We should not conclude that people understood John as the new Elijah; but his fiery discourses touched their hearts.

Finally, as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, the great Prophet, John the Baptist came as **“A voice of one crying out in the desert, prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.”** For the coming of the Savior was immediate. His sole mission was to prepare the hearts of the people to welcome the Messiah. John’s appearance was an assurance for Israel that God has not forgotten them. While people of Israel were wandering in the desert God was very close to them and He spoke to them directly. The people also were rather faithful to God. The reason why John started his ministry in the desert was, to give the people once again the desert experience of their ancestors who heard God personally. And also John wanted to correct the pride of the scribes and Pharisees who believed that as they were the descendants of Abraham, eternal life was guaranteed to them. Through his fiery discourse in today’s gospel John is refuting this wrong notion. In other, words John makes it very clear that due to the merits of Abraham, their Father, the present sinful generation would not be entitled to have eternal salvation, **unless and until they repent for their sins and go for a true conversion.**

In John’s preaching we notice one basic demand – **“Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”** The similar demand we hear in Jesus’ preaching too especially at the beginning of his ministry – **“Repent and believe in the gospel” (Mk 1:15).** Both

John and Jesus use the word **‘Repent’** without further explanation or interpretation. It means the people really understood the true meaning of repentance. Though many scribes and Pharisees looked forward to have a free ticket to heaven, in the teaching of the Rabbis repentance was the key point to all religious faith and all relationship with God. We have quite a few of Psalms expressing the repentance of the penitents. According to John and Jesus the true repentance should lead the person to a **total conversion**. In the words of St. Paul it is nothing but **stripping off the old man** and wearing the new man. In Greek it is called *‘metanoia’* which means total conversion of mind.

The modern age lost the sense of sin. Many think it doesn’t matter how they live, for eternal life is granted to everyone. These days many Christians too keep the false notion that as baptized Christians, eternal life is guaranteed to them. But Jesus warns such people: **“Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven” (Mt 7:21).** Yet there are many people in the modern age who have the pride in the hearts that what will happen if I have sinned. After all God doesn’t have any police force. To such people in the Book of Sirach, the author give strict warning: ***“Say not: “I have sinned, yet what has befallen me?” for the Lord bides his time. Of forgiveness, be not overconfident, adding sin upon sin. Say not: “Great is his mercy; my many sins he will forgive. For mercy and anger alike are with him” (Sir 5:4-7).*** The only way that leads to salvation is Jesus Christ and the undivided faith in him. To achieve eternal life there is only one simple condition Jesus poses before us; *repent and believe in the gospel*. If we have the humility to accept our sins and confess them, he is ready to forgive us. In 1 John 1:9 we read, **“But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.”**