

Second Sunday of Advent

December 6th, 2020

Who was John the Baptist?

In the readings of this weekend, we have two sources to introduce John to the story of Jesus.

After 400 years of Prophetic silence, this voice comes out of the desert “{Prepare the way of the Lord”. The people of Israel have longed to hear words of Comfort. After being conquered and taken into captivity in Babylon, they desired to be freed, to return to Jerusalem. So, the words of Isaiah are soothing to their ears “Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her service is at an end, her guilt is expiated...”

The desert can be viewed as sacred. Or as cleansing, or frightening. So, who is this Voice crying out in the desert? Mark cites the Prophet Isaiah which we hear in the First Reading: “Behold I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way.”

We may remember that John is the son of Zacharia and Elizabeth, Mary’s Kinswoman. But we hear nothing more of John until 30 years later, at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry. We could say that the Prophet John the Baptist was a transitional figure linking the Old testament prophets to the New Testament fulfillment of Jesus as the Messiah.

John was truly a transitional figure, forming the link between the Old and New Testaments. He spans the ages with one foot firmly planted in the Old Testament and the other squarely placed in the New. John was an end-times prophet. His message was that the Kingdom of heaven is near, The Long-awaited Messiah had arrived with the presence of Jesus, Nazareth. The time for judgment is near.

This is what John proclaimed: “I have baptized you with water,
HE will baptize you with the Holy Spirit”.

Mark covers more of John’s ministry in later chapters of his Gospel.