

Homily. 2nd Sunday in Advent. Year. C. 7/8 December 2024.

For my money Pope Saint John Paul II said it best when he told us that for most people in the world you and I are the only gospel they will ever get to hear. In saying this was making it plain to us that the majority of people won't end up in our pews, sharing our prayers and sacraments, our community or our way of life. He implied that we here are the minority who have a special gift to share and mission to live.

We're like that pinch of yeast in the floury dough that makes it all rise so as to nourish the hunger of the world. In another related image Jesus described us as being like a city on a hill that couldn't and shouldn't be hidden away. Our light is given so that we can shine out for all the world to see. Our gifts are given so that by using them more people will come to recognise God, giving thanks to the loving Father of all goodness.

John the Baptist was such a figure, a bridge between the old first covenant and the new one that was emerging, here now but not yet seen. His way of living in the desert, existing on locusts and wild honey, won't be appropriate for us and our times, but his mission to prepare hearts and minds for the Lord's advent is as relevant to us now as it ever was. For, if last weekend's was about the destination of our journey of faith through life, this weekend's message is all about the present, the here and now of our stepping along that journey, day by day.

John believed, he taught what he believed and most importantly of all, he embodied and practiced what he taught. John was effective because he had integrity, saying what he meant and meaning with every fibre of his

being what said, backing this up with his own life. Here another saying is relevant, one attributed to St. Francis of Assisi; Preach the gospel everywhere, and use words if you must. The great saint is telling us that the good news of Jesus Christ must get out, that it must be shared and that while words can help with this, actions; our own way of life, the values we hold dear, the practices we put in place; matter most of all.

St Paul says that we are helping spread the good news already and that God who began this good work in us will see see that it is completed. Loving others, growing in knowledge, deepening our spiritual perception and insight, these matter much as we journey inwards towards the Day of Christ where we reach perfect goodness to the praise and glory of God.

For the present time we are to let Christ turn us into his message so that we can live and love with his own heart. It's as if he's telling us not to be afraid to lift him out of the manger and carry him into every moment, encounter and relationship in our lives, especially those that seem to us the most ordinary and mundane. In doing so we'll become like John the Baptist and St. Francis, prophets of hope and healing, the embodiment of the Lord's good news and presence to everyone we meet and serve.