

Homily. 2nd Sunday in Advent. Year. C. 3/4 December 2022.

Matthew began his gospel today saying that in due course John arrived in the wilderness preaching his message of repentance for the Kingdom of heaven was near at hand. This tells us that at the right time, at God's appointed time, John commenced his preaching and converting mission.

John wasn't the sort of person one invited to polite dinner parties. He dressed strangely in camel hair garments, itchy and smelly at best. His diet of locusts and wild honey was nothing if not peculiar. John's outfit and diet along with his entire demeanour spoke as powerfully as his words. These were the garments of poverty, the diet of someone utterly reliant on God for his daily sustenance and survival. The people saw John before they ever heard him, recognising in him a truly spiritual man totally devoted to doing as God asked of him.

John's message was urgent demanding that those who heard him set about getting into shape, quickly changing the direction of their lives, for God was acting now, this instant. The long awaited Messiah was just over the horizon, Christ was ready to reveal himself, time was running out. This is the message of Advent, of this season we are in as our Church begins again on the path of our renewal, for the incarnation is the ultimate testimony that God is close to us to help us in our daily troubles and trials.

Christ is our friend, says St. Paul, offering us hope everyday day that we live. Just as people in the past by their faith found hope in endurance, we, too, are called to be people of hope in our times. We don't give up or give in to selfishness and despair, so easy to do. Instead we choose to be

friendly, kind and tolerant of one another so that our lives give glory to God who has befriended us in the Lord by becoming one of us.

This is the Kingdom of God that John announced. It's God's way for us of forgiveness, mercy and unselfishness, made real in the daily realities of our lives, our families, our communities and our world right now, right this instant. Hopefulness isn't just wishes and talk. It has to be acted on. It demands to be worked out in the choices we make and the ways we decide to speak and live together.

This is what John did. It's what he called for his people to do, marking their change by baptism in the Jordan River. It's what you and I who are already baptised and reborn into Christ are asked to do and to be as Advent unfolds; to become once again a people of hope who know, and who show that we know that while we breathe we hope, for we are certain that Christ has come, is coming soon and will come again to complete the answer to all of the hopes in our hearts.