

ADVENT II SUNDAY (DEC 5, 2010): IS 11: 1-10; Rom 15: 4-9; Mt 3: 1-12

Waiting, an inevitable and even necessary aspect of human life, is not something that most of us relish. We *wait* in lines: in order to purchase groceries; to be served at popular restaurants; to be attended to in a bank; at stop signs and traffic signals; at amusement parks; to see a play or film. We must also *wait* for flowers to grow and bloom; for babies to be born; for wounds to heal; for bread to rise and cheese to age; for children to mature; for friends to call; for love to deepen. Statisticians have estimated that in a lifetime of 70 years, the average person spends at least three years *waiting*! Today's readings invite us to *wait* for the rebirth of the Lord in our lives with repentant hearts and renewed lives.

John the Baptist, in today's gospel, summons us to play an essential part in our own salvation by leading lives of repentance, conversion and renewal, thus preparing the way for the Lord's second coming. We start this process by preparing for the celebration of Christmas. John the Baptizer warns the Pharisees and Sadducees to give evidence that they mean to reform their lives so as to recognize and accept the promised Messiah. He challenges them to repentance, conversion and renewal of life. He tells the common people, who are filled with the expectation that the Messiah is near, to act with justice and charity, letting their lives reflect the transformation that will occur when the Messiah enters their lives. In the same way, as we prepare to welcome Christ at Christmas, John advises us to "*prepare the way of the Lord.*"

Advent is meant to be a time when we too can hear John's words and prepare our own hearts for Jesus. Each and every day, Jesus invites us to draw nearer to him so that we can develop an intimate friendship with him and share even more deeply in his holiness. What can hinder this intimacy? Sin, fear, indifference to God, and lack of compassion for others-these are some of the bigger obstacles. And this is why John's call to repentance is so important.

God wants to free us from everything that holds us back from surrendering to his love and his will. Every time we turn to him and repent, he comes to lift us up to heaven and give us another glimpse of his kingdom- a vision that fills us with hope and joy.