

HOMILY FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT YEAR A 2016 MATTHEW

1. John Baptist shouts to everyone who can hear him
 - a. Repent, the kingdom of God is at hand
 - b. i.e., change the direction of your life, you are walking away from God not to Him
 - c. John knows these are not comfortable words, we are creatures of habit and comfort
 - d. Simple habits such as how we get going in the morning
 - e. Or coming to Mass each week
 - i. Longer we follow certain routines, harder it will be to change
 - ii. It feels strange, often easier to make excuses than to change a habit
 - f. So, for if you usually to Mass on Sundays you will feel like something is missing if you do not go one Sunday
 - i. If you are not used to going, it will probably feel hard to get out of bed, even if you want to start going regularly
2. in the Gospel John is baptizing people who express their commitment to change their lives in baptism
 - a. He notices Pharisees and Sadducees coming to His baptism
 - b. Calls out to them: You brood of vipers, who warned you about the coming wrath of God
 - i. Interesting that include both Sadducees and Pharisees
 - ii. They are each large, influential groups in Israel but they are on the opposite side on almost everything in Israel
 - c. One thing they have in common but would reject in the other
 - i. Each group sees itself as being the true children of Abraham while rejecting the other
 - d. John the Baptist rejects this presumption
 - i. God can raise children from these stones
 - ii. If you hope to be ready for the Messiah, your lives must show it
 - iii. You must produce good fruit in your life, not just hope to be the right people
3. John announced to His people God is giving you another chance to change your lives
4. He is also telling us now is the time for us to get ready for the coming of Christ
 - a. We are to get ready not just for His first coming but His final coming when He comes to judge us
 - b. Now is the time for us to change the direction of our lives
 - c. Each of us must ask ourselves this question
 - d. Where am I failing God,
 - i. where am I failing to love Him with everything that I have and am
 - ii. Where am I failing to love my neighbor as myself
 - e. Only if we are honest with ourselves can we begin to change our lives
5. John could only offer baptism as the symbolic commitment to change the direction of our lives
 - a. Jesus has given us the sacrament of Reconciliation
 - b. We can hear the words of forgiveness with the hope that God gives us the grace to begin to change where we are going
6. We must avoid presumption like the Pharisees and Sadducees

- a. It is tempting to say to myself, I am a pretty good person
 - b. If I am a church-goer, I might want to say well I am a lot better than a lot of those people
 - i. I don't use drugs, I am not a violent person, I obey all the laws
 - c. Those who don't go to church or get into trouble probably say at least I am not a hypocrite like those people
7. John's answer is the day is coming when God will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire
- a. He will separate the wheat from the chaff
8. These can be hard words to take seriously, isn't God a loving and forgiving God
- a. Would He really do anything to us
 - b. We forget that good parents have to use tough love at times
 - c. If their children are going to grow up the way they believe they should, they are going to discipline the children in some way
 - d. Discipline will never fun, changing behavior is hard
9. As Catholics we believe that God will give us a final second chance with Purgatory at the moment of death
- a. Need to remember that Purgatory is not a nice little rest stop on the way to heaven
 - b. We may think that repentance and Reconciliation are hard in this life
 - c. It is hard to change our lives
 - d. At least with time and the help of the sacraments this can be a gradual change
10. When we die, we are going to see ourselves totally in one moment
- a. We will see who we hurt, how we failed to be the persons we pretend to be
 - b. We will see the goodness and patience of God throughout our lives
 - c. We will see clearly how undeserving we are of God's love
 - d. All of this will come crashing down on us in one moment
11. Our hope will be that God's love will not only be a purifying fire
- a. It will be a healing fire as well
 - b. We will also have the supportive love of the prayers of the Church as well
12. John is telling us why wait for that ultimate moment of purification
- a. Why not immerse ourselves in the sacramental signs of God's love now
 - b. Let's do the hard work of changing now, rather than wait for the sudden purification of Purgatory