



Bringing Home the Word

Second Sunday of Advent (C)
December 5, 2021

The Time Is Right

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Saint Luke loves to be precise in his Gospel, so he documents the exact time and place of the appearance of John the Baptist, the precursor to Jesus. Tiberius was the second emperor of Rome, and the fifteenth year of his reign corresponds to AD 27. Pontius Pilate was prefect from the years 26 to 36. Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, ruled in Galilee until his death in the year 39 and is the Herod who had John the Baptist beheaded. On the Jewish side, Caiaphas was high priest, and his influential father-in-law Annas was considered a leader of Jewish religious life.

These historical dates align with Luke’s explanation, as well as other events described in his Gospel. Ours is a faith based on real people and events. No doubt there is a great appreciation for the supernatural in our faith, but it is never *against* nature, just *beyond* it.

Jesus praised John the Baptist (see Matthew 11:2–9) for his strong will and dedication. Humility, austerity, courage, and a spirit of prayer are also a large part of the testimony John left us. In the Vatican painting, *Virgin and Child Surrounded by Saints*, the artist Marco Palmezzano dresses John the Baptist in the martyr’s red and camel skin to accent his supreme virtue. So dedicated and heroic was he in his fulfillment of the mission entrusted to him, Jesus acclaimed “among those born of women there has been none greater” (Matthew 11:11). “He was a burning and shining lamp” (John 5:35) to illuminate the path toward the true light who was coming into the world. Once that divine light arrived, John receded into the shadows. +

Sunday Readings

Baruch 5:1–9

Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and misery; put on forever the splendor of glory from God.

Philippians 1:4–6, 8–11

Discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.

Luke 3:1–6

He went throughout [the] whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

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A Word from Pope Francis

To prepare the way of the Lord’s coming, it is necessary to take note of the requirements of conversion to which the Baptist invites us....First of all we are called to fill the “valleys” caused by coldness and indifference, opening ourselves to others with the same sentiments as Jesus, that is, with affection and fraternal attention.

Second Sunday of Advent,
December 9, 2018



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Do I lead people to Jesus through my dedicated testimony?
- Do I speak easily and naturally of Jesus with family and friends?

Keeping Christ in Christianity

By Fr. Byron Miller, CSsR

If only Christmas came when all the stores were less crowded! 'Tis the season for banners, billboards, and bumper stickers to remind us to avoid commercialism and “Keep Christ in Christmas.” What if there was also a perennial campaign to keep Christ in Christianity? Is Christ’s gospel message easily recognizable all year long in those of us who call ourselves

Christian?

In Flannery O’Connor’s novel *Wise Blood*, a street evangelist preaches his own gospel from his so-called Church Without Christ. But is truth stranger than O’Connor’s fiction when Christian televangelists preach a “prosperity” gospel that claims God rewards true believers with material wealth? How does one reconcile such a gospel with Christ’s humble birth in a stable?

Moreover, how is such a gospel consistent with the heart of Christ’s preaching—the Beatitudes? “The Beatitudes confront us with decisive choices concerning earthly goods; they purify our hearts in order to teach us to love God above all things” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1728).

“Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven,” Jesus says concerning the poor in spirit and the pure of heart; the meek, merciful, and mournful; the righteous and those persecuted for their righteousness; the peacemakers and those who are reviled because of their belief in him (see Matthew 5:3–12).



“The Beatitudes reveal the goal of human existence, the ultimate end of human acts: God calls us to his own beatitude” (CCC 1719). This beatitude “teaches us that true happiness is not found in riches or well-being, in human fame or power, or in any human achievement...but in God alone” (1723). According to John Henry Cardinal Newman, “All bow down before wealth. Wealth is that to which [most] men pay an instinctive homage....resulting from a profound faith...that with wealth he may do all things.”

Because of Christ’s total obedience to the Father, our reward is everlasting, unlike material wealth: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in

him might not perish but might have eternal life” (John 3:16). “The beatitude of eternal life is a gratuitous gift of God” (CCC 1727). For this treasure, all bow down and. Pay instinctive homage! The reward for true believers is not earthly prosperity but heavenly posterity!

Mark Twain said, “If you pick up a starving dog and make him prosperous, he will not bite you. This is the principal difference between a dog and a man.” Feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick and imprisoned, assisting the poor—and expecting no reward—together comprise the fundamental difference between keeping Christ in Christianity and belonging to a Church Without Christ. +

“The Beatitudes confront us with decisive choices concerning earthly goods.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1728

PRAYER

Lord, you are always patient with me and do great things for me. Teach me to be more patient in life and grateful for all that has been given to me.

—From *Joyful Meditations for Every Day of Advent and the 12 Days of Christmas*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

December 6–11

Monday, Advent Weekday:

Is 35:1–10 / Lk 5:17–26

Tuesday, St. Ambrose:

Is 40:1–11 / Mt 18:12–14

Wednesday, Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Gn 3:9–15, 20 / Eph 1:3–6, 11–12 / Lk 1:26–38

Thursday, Advent Weekday:

Is 41:13–20 / Mt 11:11–15

Friday, Advent Weekday:

Is 48:17–19 / Mt 11:16–19

Saturday, Advent Weekday:

Sir 48:1–4, 9–11 / Mt 17:9a, 10–13

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