

**"John points to the coming of Christ and His kingdom"****Reading 1:** Isaiah 11: 1-10**Reading 2:** Romans 15: 4-9**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 72: 1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17**Gospel:** Matthew 3: 1-12**Gospel Reading: *Matthew 3: 1-12***

John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: A voice of one crying out in the desert, Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. John wore clothing made of camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins.

When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

**Meditation:**

John the Baptist's life was fueled by one burning passion - to point others to Jesus Christ and to the coming of his kingdom. Who is John the Baptist and what is the significance of his message for our lives? Scripture tells us that John was *filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb* (Luke 1:15, 41) by Christ himself, whom Mary had just conceived by the Holy Spirit. When Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth John leapt in her womb as they were filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:41). Like the prophets of the Old Testament, John devoted his entire life to prayer and the word of God. He was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness where he was tested and grew in the word of God. John's clothing was reminiscent of the prophet Elijah (see Kings 1:8). The Holy Spirit prepared John for the mission entrusted to him as forerunner of the Messiah, Jesus Christ - the Word of God who became man for our salvation (John 1:1,14). John pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world by offering his life on the cross as the atoning sacrifice for our sins and the sin of the world (John 1:29). John broke the prophetic silence of the previous centuries when he began to speak the word of God to the people of Israel. His message was similar to the message of the Old Testament prophets who chided the people of God for their unfaithfulness and who tried to awaken true repentance in them. Among a people unconcerned with the things of God, it was his work to awaken their interest, unsettle them from their complacency, and arouse in them enough good will to recognize and receive Christ when he came. Are you eager to hear God's word and to be changed by it through the power of the Holy Spirit?

***A new era of God's restoration begins***

Jesus tells us that John the Baptist was *more than a prophet* (Luke 7:26). John was the *voice* of the Consoler who is coming (John 1:23; Isaiah 40:1-3). He completed the cycle of prophets begun by Elijah (Matthew 11:13-14). What the prophets had carefully searched for and angels longed to see, now came to completion as John made the way ready for the coming of the Messiah, God's Anointed Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. With John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit begins the restoration to the human race of the "divine likeness", prefiguring what would be achieved with and in the Lord Jesus.

John's baptism was for repentance - turning away from sin and taking on a new way of life according to God's word. Our baptism in Jesus Christ by water and the Spirit results in a new birth and entry into God's kingdom as his beloved sons and daughters (John 3:5). The Lord Jesus gives us the fire of his Spirit so that we may radiate the joy and truth of the Gospel to a world in desperate need of God's light and truth. His word has power to change and transform our lives that we may be lights pointing others to Christ. Like John the Baptist, we too are called to give testimony to the light and truth of Jesus Christ. Do you point others to Christ in the way you live, work, and speak?

**Questions for Community Faith Sharing:**

- *What was the purpose of John the Baptist's message? How do you understand what it means to "repent"?*
- *How have you focused on the needs of others this Advent? How have you reached outside your family and circle of friends to help?*

"Lord, let your light burn brightly in my heart that I may know the joy and freedom of your kingdom. Fill me with your Holy Spirit and empower me to witness the truth of your Gospel and to point others to Jesus Christ."

OUR PARISH VISION – A PARTICIPATIVE CHRIST-CENTERED COMMUNITY OF DISCIPLES BUILDING THE KINGDOM OF GOD.