

Forming Good Stewards

Good stewards are formed by other good stewards!

Please make sure this is distributed to the **pastor**, to the other **priest and deacons** in the parish, and to the **person who produces the bulletin**.

Bulletin Bites

December 6, 2020

Second Sunday of Advent

A voice of one crying out in the desert:

Mark 1:1-8

Option 1

“One mightier than I is coming after me.” Mark 1:1-8

Christmas is the day we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Incarnate Word of God. It is a very special moment for all Christians. It is a time of giving. Have you finished your Christmas shopping yet? Have you even finished making your Christmas list? What gift have you prepared for Jesus? Is Jesus even on your Christmas list? Should he not be at the top of our list? In the first lines of Mark’s Gospel we see that Jesus is at the top of John’s list. He has prepared the way for Jesus. He recognized that “One mightier than I is coming after me.” John’s gift was his humble recognition of Jesus as the one who “will baptize you with water and the Holy Spirit.” If we have no other gift for Jesus, we can humbly acknowledge God as the source of all that we are and have and spend time pondering how we use all that God has given us to the best of our ability in the year to come. Jesus would love such a gift.

Option 2

“Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.”

The comment we often hear when someone is acting silly or goofy is “Oh, that is just George [or whatever the person’s name] being George.” We can wonder what Elizabeth or Zachariah said when people told them that their son John was living in the desert, wearing a camelhair shirt and leather belt [expensive belts were braided or made of fine linen] and eating locust and wild honey. Did they say, “Oh, that’s just John being John.” If so, they were right. John was being *who* and *what* God created him to be - a messenger sent by God to prepare the way of the Lord by making straight his path and calling people to repent for their sins. John had accepted his role and mission in life. He knew he was not the Messiah but that he was to prepare the way for the Messiah. He may have dressed a little strange and eaten an unusual diet, but he did what God created him to do. Are we doing what God created us to do? Are we preparing the way for the Lord, at least the way for the Lord to come into our heart?

December 13, 2020
Third Sunday of Advent
Gospel Jn 1:6-8, 19-28

Option 1

**“I am the voice of one crying out in the desert,
make straight the way of the Lord”**

Today we hear the story of the Baptism of Jesus from the beginning of St. John’s Gospel. John adds the information that “This happened in Bethany across from the Jordan where John was baptizing.” This situates the event on the east side of the Jordan River, not far from Herod’s castle/fortress at Machaerus, where John would soon be beheaded. John the Baptist did not urge people to challenge the authority of leaders of the Jews or call for the overthrow of the civil government, or an armed revolt. He called upon people to change their own hearts and to live according to God’s Commandment to love God and our neighbor as our self. This is how we “make straight the way of the Lord” to enter our hearts. For many this involves radical change. It involves a humble admission that *What We Are is God’s Gift to Us; What We Become is Our Gift to God*. Are you still struggling with a gift for Jesus. Here it is: “Make straight the way of the Lord” to enter your heart by a humble admission of who God is in our lives.

Option 2

“The one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie.”

Many children have a visit from “Santa” at a family gathering just before Christmas. Typically, Santa sounds like and resembles one of the male elders of the family [who tries unsuccessfully to change his voice]. Small children are either excited or frightened. As they grow older they get suspicious and start to ask questions, “Why is Pappa never here when Santa comes?” and “Why is Santa wearing Pappa’s glasses and watch?” It is a rite of passage when they finally “get it” and become responsible for keeping a treasured family secret. For the Jews in Jerusalem who sent priest and Levites to ask John *who* and *what* he was, the implications were much more serious than the identity of Santa. If John was the Messiah, or was proclaiming the imminent arrival of the Messiah, the influence and livelihoods of the priest and Levites could be at risk. They were concerned that God *had* become incarnate. Do we understand the implications of God incarnate? That is what we are preparing to celebrate on Christmas. Are we ready for that?

December 20, 2020
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Luke 1:26-38

Option 1

**“Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.
May it be done to me according to your word. ”**

If you add up all of the words spoken by Mary to the Angel at the Annunciation [30]; to Elizabeth at their meeting [122 in the Magnificat]; When she and Joseph find Jesus in the Temple[20]; and her comments to Jesus and instructions to the servants at the wedding feast at Cana [9], she speaks a total of 181 words in most English translations of Scripture. Mary was a woman of few words, at least according to the Gospels. From expressing her lack of

understanding about how God would accomplish what the angel announced to her, to her simple, “May it be done unto me according to your word” and her awareness that “My *soul* proclaims the greatness of the Lord” to her final instructions to the servants at Cana, “Do whatever he tells you.” Mary is both our Mother and our Model. As Christmas gets nearer we should all be growing stronger in our willingness to accept the challenges God has in store for us with a simple “May it be done unto me according to your word” so our *soul* will “proclaim the greatness of our Lord” and we will be ready, without hesitation to “Do whatever he tells you.” Now, let us celebrate Christmas.

Option 2

Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.

May it be done to me according to your word.”

On the Second Sunday of Advent we noted that “John [The Baptist] was just being John.” He discerned God’s will for him and he did it. Now we hear about “Mary just being Mary,” a young teenager in a tiny hamlet on a craggy hilltop in the northern region of Galilee. Mary heard a message from God so amazing she wondered how it could happen. But she realized it was God’s will for her and she consented. There were many details and consequences she could not know, but she said “Yes!” to be the human mother of God incarnate. That was “Mary just being Mary.” That is all God asked of her and that is all God ask of us - to be all that God creates us to be. For us, just as for John and Mary, we begin by identifying, accepting and developing all of the unique talents, abilities and gifts God has given to each of us, and then using them to the best of our ability *for ourselves and for others*. Is that not the greatest gift we can give to Jesus when we celebrate his birth on Christmas? Is our present for Jesus ready?

December 25, 2017

Solemnity of Christmas

The Word Became Flesh and Made His Dwelling Among Us!

Gospel John 1:1-18

Option 1

In the rush and clamor that has come to characterize the commercialization of Christmas the true meaning of what we are celebrating can easily get lost. From a week before Thanksgiving until sometime after the New Year there seems to be an excess of activity, confusion, decorating, spending [often of money we cannot afford], eating, drinking, and competitiveness. On the positive side many families gather to renew great traditions and indulge in feast of treasured family recipes; friends reunite; and we make new acquaintances. By the time the decorations are dismantled and stored away the whole process can seem like an endurance test that leaves us exhausted and bewildered, rather than rejuvenated and rejoicing, about the true meaning of Christmas for all of us who are baptized in the name of our Triune God, the awesome truth that:

THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND MADE HIS DWELLING AMONG US!

HAVE A CHRIST FILLED CHRISTMAS!

December 27, 2020
The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Option 1

“Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace. . .” Luke 2:22-40

How was your Christmas? Did you get what you wanted? Was everybody happy with the gifts you gave them? Have you returned all of the presents you received that you did not want or that do not fit? Did you spend some time Jesus? Do we realize and appreciate his role and importance in our lives? Do we understand that a constantly growing intimate relationship with Jesus is a tremendous gift? St. Luke tells us about Simeon, a righteous and devout man who awaited the consolation of Israel. Eight days after the first Christmas, the Birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary brought him to the Temple to perform the custom of the law. Simeon realizes that the Lord had fulfilled his promise to let him see Christ the Lord. When Simeon saw the child Jesus he knew he had received a tremendous gift. We have received the gift of awareness of who and what Jesus is in our lives. A constantly growing intimate relationship with Jesus is the real gift of Christmas. It is a gift we should cherish and share with others.

Option 2

**“Behold, this child is destined for the rise and fall of many in Israel,
and to be a sign that will be contradicted.”**

The words of the righteous and devout Simeon who prayed for the consolation of Israel, when he saw the child Jesus, have sadly been true for more than 2,000 years. The life, message and mission of Jesus have caused contradiction and conflict for many because *He affirmed by His Words and Deeds, by what He Said and Did*, the command God gave to Moses to give to the Israelites to “*Love God with your whole heart, mind, soul and strength. And love your neighbor as yourself.*” When Jesus did that, and when we do that, we cause anxiety and anger for those who seek profit, power and domination of others. In order for them to succeed they must ridicule, reject, condemn and eliminate disciples of Jesus who insist on imitating Him. Those are the consequences the Holy Spirit inspired Simeon to declare about the Child Jesus when he was presented in the temple by Mary and Joseph. As disciples of Jesus we accept the responsibility to be a contradiction to those who reject Jesus.