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| 2nd Sunday of Advent Year B |
| Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11 |
| 2 Peter 3:8-14 |
| Mark 1:1-8 |

**A. Text and Context**

* The gospel today speaks of a fulfillment of a prophecy by the prophet Isaiah saying “Prepare the way of the Lord make straight his paths”
* John seems to suddenly just appear in the scene from out of nowhere and wearing some kind of a weird clothing made out of the hair of a camel even eating locusts and honey for food. So we need to go back a little of his background why is this so
* In the religion of the Jews there are four major groups:
  1. Pharisees- they are the interpreters of the law
  2. Sadducees- they belong to the priestly clan or family and they are responsible in the operation of the temple
  3. Essenes- they live in the desert separate from the mainstream Judaism because they want to live the purity of their religion
  4. Zealots- they are the revolutionaries who are discontented of the existing laws and policies of their religion
* John comes from the community of the Essenes faithfully following the tenets of Judaism through a life of prayer, sacrifice, penance and mortification
* In other words John is some kind of a hermit with the rest of the group living in the desert waiting for the Messiah to come. The Essenes look like hermits living in the desert.
* The Jews who are very faithful to the Scriptures and faithful to their faith understands John as the forerunner of the Messiah or the precursor
* The role of John is an advanced party of the Lord and some would even acknowledge him as the Messiah because he preaches about the kingdom of God, penance, prayer fasting, conversion
* But the ones knowledgeable on the Scriptures know that he is not. They understand that the Messiah will soon come after him, so definitely he will not be John
* So John enjoys a status of high regard and respect in the Jewish society
* And now for quite a long period of time the Israelites carry some kind of a moral guilt because of the sins that they commit and there is a need to unburden that guilt to prepare for the coming of the Lord, the feeling of being abandoned by God because of their sins
* And so when John began to preach about repentance because the kingdom is at hand people from Judea and Jerusalem came to John in order to be baptized in the Jordan River to prepare themselves for the coming of the Messiah
* The people are aware because it is written in the prophecy of Isaiah in the Scriptures
* And so John baptized the people with water but he said that the one who comes after me will baptize you with the Holy Spirit

**B. Human Situation**

* We are still in the 1st part of Advent which started on the 1st Sunday of Advent until December 16. This time we celebrate the coming of Jesus as the judge. The coming of Jesus for the last judgment
* Now if we ask this question: that if supposing a modern prophet similar to that of John the Baptist would suddenly come to preach to us in this cathedral one Sunday morning and say to everyone: repent for the final judgment is at hand! Go and straighten your life for the Lord will soon come to judge us!
* Would you believe? Would you repent for all your mistakes and wrongdoings? Are you going to reconcile with the people you hate? Are you going to be charitable to all the people who ask for your help?
* Most probably, the majority of us will never believe because everybody knows, that nobody knows when will the day of judgment be
* But in this century Mary has been appearing in many parts of the world including the Philippines to remind us to repent of our sins: Fatima. Lourdes, Akita, Medjugorje, La Sallette, etc. She brings the same message of conversion that John preached
* Apart from the BVM many modern prophets are all around the world telling us to repent and go back to the Lord
* Jesus has already come for the first time and the way is already prepared because Jesus has left us all the teachings recorded on Scriptures. All the teachings of love, forgiveness, repentance, reconciliation is already left to us
* What is mentioned in the 2nd reading in the 2nd letter of Peter? Do not ignore this one fact that with the Lord, one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like one day
* But certainly, the Lord will really come again. And the same message of love, forgiveness, repentance, reconciliation, conversion is preached in the homilies and sermons from the pulpits of the Church over and over again for more than 2,000 years now to continue to remind us to prepare ourselves always in the event that Jesus will come anytime
* Still, we cannot stop God to send his modern prophets headed by the Blessed Virgin Mary and the genuine holy visionaries to warn the faithful people to prepare themselves for the 2nd coming
* When the mainstream Church has become so secular and even the hierarchy in the Church is already infiltrated with Freemasonry, will the Church warn us that Mary or the visionaries or the modern prophets will come to warn us?
* No. Even if the Blessed Mother comes, her messages will not be endorsed and propagated by the mainstream Church because the very academic theologians will only say it is too superstitious
* But the faithful children of God will propagate the message of the preparation for the 2nd coming. They will do the duty of warning the people to prepare
* Still, the final judgment will come no matter how remote it is that it will come as we think of it today because Jesus have promised to come again
* Lastly, even if nobody will warn us, the signs of the times happening all over the world, all prophesied in the Scriptures have become harder and harder to ignore
* The signs have become very obvious that the voice of Isaiah in the 1st reading that if we prepare ourselves we will be ready to be taken home from exile

**C. Challenge**

* This is the call of preparedness, the call of readiness anytime. We must always be ready for the final judgment because anytime the Lord will arrive at the very doorstep of our home
* The season of Advent is the season of penance. We must not postpone repentance anymore. We must start to unburden the guilt we carry because of our wrongdoings right now by going back to God and live once more a life worthy before his eyes.
* We ask forgiveness to all the people whom we have wronged with. Ask forgiveness to those whom you hurt and offended
* We grant forgiveness to those who offended us and even still, grant forgiveness even if the person who hurt you did not even ask for it and there you will find joy.
* We will become good Christians if we do this, and we would not even worry of the final accounting on the last days
* If we do good work already, continue doing that and make it better. If we haven’t done anything yet, start now
* If we do naughty things, stop, and rethink of the values that Jesus has left us. If we do nothing to straighten up our life now through repentance and tomorrow will be the day of judgment, everything will be late and we only have regrets