

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

December 10, 2006

During this second week of Advent, John the Baptist walks onto the stage and calls people to a new beginning. Our baptism is also a new beginning. Day after day, as we are renewed in our baptism, God who began a good work in us continues to prepare us for the day of Jesus Christ.

FIRST READING: Malachi 3:1-4

The LORD announces a covenant with Israel. A messenger like Malachi (whose name means "my messenger") shall prepare a way for the sudden coming of the Lord, who will purify and refine God's people so they can offer pleasing sacrifices.

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to the temple. Indeed, the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight is coming, says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

PSALMODY. LUKE 1:68-79

the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us. (Luke 1:78)

Blessed are you, Lord, the ¹ God of Israel,
you have come to your people and ¹ set them free.

**You have raised up for us a ¹ mighty Savior,
born of the house of your ¹ servant David. R**

Through your holy prophets, you promised of old to save us ¹ from our enemies,
⁷¹from the hand of ¹ all who hate us,

**to show mercy ¹ to our forebears,
and to remember your ¹ holy covenant.**

This was the oath your swore to our ¹ father Abraham:

⁷⁴to set us free from the hands of our ¹ enemies,
**free to worship you ¹ without fear,
⁷⁵holy and righteous before you, all the days ¹ of our life. R**

And you, child, shall be called the prophet of ¹ the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to pre- ¹ pare the way,

**to give God's people knowledge ¹ of salvation
by the forgiveness ¹ of their sins.**

In the tender compassion ¹ of our God
the dawn from on high shall ¹ break upon us,

**to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shad- ¹ ow of death,
and to guide our feet into the ¹ way of peace. R**

SECOND READING: Philippians 1:3-11

Paul exhorts Christians to experience love that grows "richer in knowledge and insight of every kind" until the day of Christ Jesus. On that day, the good work begun in them will be flawless, a "full harvest of righteousness."

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus.

And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the

harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

GOSPEL: Luke 3:1-6

Luke takes care to place John in secular history. Yet John's arrival also heralds a new period of salvation history. John refers to the words of the prophets, but with a new immediacy: Now is the time to prepare for Christ through a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene,

during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. And John went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight the paths of the Lord.'

'Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.' "