**FOR THE WEEKEND OF DEC. 7-8, 2024**

Second Sunday in Advent

**Gospel Reading**

Luke 6: 1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert.

He went throughout [the] whole region of 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:

“A voice of one crying out in the desert: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

**Intercession**

May our deeds, including support of the *Catholic Ministry Appeal*, serve as a light in today’s troubled world: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.”

**Copy for Bulletin Announcement**

In today’s Gospel, of the life and preaching of John the Baptist are a sign for all people: “Prepare the way of the Lord.” How do we do this?

To hear God’s. ice we must be quiet, to “be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:11). This isn’t easy to do in our noisy culture that encourages constant movement, racing from one activity to the next, occupying our time by scrolling through social media feeds or binge watching the latest Netflix series. But we must “make straight the paths” within our own hearts so that we can fully receive God’s holy word – especially the Word made flesh, Christ, born to us at Christmas.

John was the voice crying out in the desert. What are our deserts? Are we letting the Word of God dry out and die within us or do we nurture it with time spent in prayer? Are we so consumed with the material aspect of Christmas that we come to the end of Advent still thirsty for spiritual fulfillment?

John was considered a prophet, and he was the first to acknowledge that he was merely preparing his listeners for one greater than he. When we listen to John’s message, we are preparing for the coming of a Messiah so radical that mountains are made low and valleys are raised. Christ humbled the self-important and exalted the lowly. Let us do the same. Let us live in hope and share with others the hope that only Christ can provide through your prayers and a gift to the *Catholic Ministry Appeal*. May God bless you for your generosity, and may you experience the Christ’s peace during this Advent season.

**Copy for Pulpit Announcement**

Today’s Gospel is a study of contrasts: the rough made smooth; the crooked, straightened, highs rendered low; lows, elevated. But perhaps the most (though less obvious) is the beginning of Luke’s Gospel account. It opens with a detailed historical account of those charged with ruling the people of Israel. It’s a who’s who of the ancient world’s most powerful: Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate, future king and current tetrarch Herod.

But John the Baptist heralds the coming of an even greater king, one who will completely turn the secular powers on their ears and change the course of human history. Jesus Christ doesn’t come in a blaze of glory, though. In complete contrast to the Roman leaders, God comes into the world as a vulnerable baby, born in a stable surrounded by livestock and visited by those on the edge of society ­– the humble shepherds.

Our lives can be a study of contrasts, too, as we seek to balance the busyness of the season with Advent’s quiet reflection. John “makes straight his path” to prepare us for Christ’s coming and subsequent ministry. How are we making “the rough ways smooth” for others? How are we an example of God’s light in the darkness? May we allow the glorious gift of God becoming human pervade our hearts this Advent and spur us to action to support of the *Catholic Ministry Appeal.*

**Social Media Post/Content**

Photo: The desert at sunrise or sunset

Header: “Prepare the way of the Lord” – Luke 3:4

Copy: Advent is a time of hope, not just in Christ’s coming birth, but in His ministry that followed and ultimately His saving death. “Make straight his paths” in our hearts now!

When you prayerfully consider giving to our diocesan *Catholic Ministry Appeal*, you are preparing for the coming of the King of Kings by advancing His kingdom on earth, here and now.