



Praying the Scripture at Home 2nd Sunday of Advent ~ 8th December

1. **Breathing exercise:** Try to do this at least once a day. Be still. To start take three deep breaths... inhale for a count of four, then exhale for a count of four (*all through your nose, which adds a natural resistance to the breath*). Then, close your eyes and focus on your normal breathing. On the in-breath be aware that it is life-giving, nurturing; a gift from God. On the out-breath be aware that you are feeding the plants and trees around you; you are blessing the world around you. Stay with that for a while: The in-breath as a gift from God; the out-breath as your gift to the world. Repeat the following: "*In you, oh Lord, I rest my soul*", for as long as you are comfortable and be aware of the God whose love envelops you.

Opening Prayer - God, the living word, we ask that we may be aware of the power of your word speaking in our lives. We ask your spirit to come among us and light the fire of your love in our hearts. As we gather to explore this word for ourselves and each other we do so in an atmosphere of openness and respect for all gathered here and for your presence among us. AMEN

2. Read **Sunday's Gospel**, two or three times (**Matthew 3:1-12**). Come back to it a few times during the week.

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'"

Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 'I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'"

- *Sit with the text, and pick a word or phrase that stands out to you. In the stillness repeat that word or phrase in your mind. Why is that word or phrase relevant to you at this moment? What feelings does it evoke?*
- *Is there something that puzzles or disturbs you? Why? -What is it calling you to do?*
- *John the Baptist came to bear witness to Jesus. Who have been the people who have borne witness to us of the good news of the gospel that God loves us—a friend, a parent, a teacher, etc.? To whom have we borne that witness?*
- *John was "the voice of one crying out in the wilderness"—announcing confidently to those in the wilderness that they must not despair because God's grace may come to them at any moment. Have you had the experience of being in the wilderness, feeling lost? From whom did you hear a voice that gave you hope? Have you been able to give hope to other people when they were in the wilderness?*

Consider this

What if this Advent, we allow ourselves to imagine a life that is different? A life that recognises God at work in all aspects. Advent is a time to recognise both our holy longing and the healing love God has for us, despite the many barriers we put up between ourselves and God. We can start simply and just rest at the edge of our beds in the mornings, open our hands and whisper, "Come, Lord Jesus!" If we let ourselves feel what is in our hearts, we know they are filled with love. We can carry that experience with us as we go through even the busiest of our days. We may not know exactly where to begin or how to fill this longing in our hearts but it is simple. God waits with infinite love and with arms outstretched to meet us. The words we say don't matter. We can speak as if God is a friend we have not seen in a long time, but one with whom we can sit in a comfortable silence. If we took time to recognise God at work in our lives, what difference would our Faith then make to our everyday lives; How better our world would be? How much more would we feel, understand and be agents of real peace.

Closing Prayer - God of life abundant, may your advent call to life and love, hope and conversion touch us again and draw us closer to you. Amen. Christ Jesus our Lord, your Son who lives and reigns with you in the unity of Holy Spirit, **Amen**