

“Being Spiritually Prepared for Jesus’s Return and the Gift of Salvation”

1. As we now enter the 2nd full week of Advent, the Lord is calling us to reflect upon our lives and to invite the Holy Spirit to draw us deeper into the mystery of Christ. The first reading from the Prophet Isaiah is a **consoling** one. It reminds us of the reality that God doesn’t want to continually punish us, but rather like a loving Father wants all His children to be filled with joy and peace, and to remember that He will reward our goodness. Jesus wants to feed His flock with the life-giving grace of His own divine life, which we receive in the Sacraments primarily, but also in the daily graces of life to help us choose what is good and reject evil. He wants to shepherd us, to gather us close to His Heart, and to lead us with care. Never forget that - if you ever doubt God’s love and care for you. Respond in kind in your dealings with others.
2. St. Peter in the 2nd reading also gives a **consoling message** to all of us who sometimes struggle with the mystery of evil and why life is so hard in this world. *“Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day. The Lord does not delay His promise, as some regard “delay”, but **He is patient with you**, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”* That is an amazing truth - God is so patient: He humbly waits for us to turn over our lives to Him, to convert and move away from sin of various sorts. He gives us the beautiful **Sacrament of Reconciliation** to heal and help us, of which I pray many of you will receive in the next week or two. Please don’t take any of this for granted! God is **patient** with human beings in our spiritual blindness and foolhardy ways - not because He is a pushover or doesn’t care what we do, but rather because He wants to ultimately save us - a long-term divine goal. God beckons us in the silence of our hearts and minds and conscience to turn away from evil and embrace goodness - which is a process of *becoming more Christ-like in all that we say, and think, and do.* He doesn’t want any of us to end up eternally separated from Him in Hell, but rather wants all to be with Him eventually in Heaven. He will do all He can on His end to bring it about - but we must agree to it in our **free**

will. He will never make us be good or force us to be with Him in Heaven - if we desire to embrace the darkness of sin and selfishness and ultimately eternal death. In the end, the current heavens and earth will be destroyed by fire, of some type - maybe the sun crashing into the earth someday; but a new heavens and new earth will be created by God in which righteousness will fully dwell - something to look forward to. So as St. Peter closes this part of his letter today, remember: *beloved, since you await these things, be eager to be found without spot or blemish before Him, at peace.*

3. Finally, we hear about **St. John the Baptist** today in the Gospel. The St. John who Jesus said is the greatest man born of woman before the new era of grace, a very holy man, a man of truth and justice. St. John the Baptist has much to teach us about the ways of God, the ways of repentance - of turning back to the Lord and asking humbly for His grace and forgiveness of our sins to change our lives in godliness. St. John the Baptist is the last of the OT prophets; and so, as all the prophets did, he points the people of his time and for all time thru the Gospel, to the Lord Jesus Christ who alone can show us the meaning and purpose of our lives, leading us to a living personal relationship with the Blessed Trinity. What **humility** St. John the Baptist possessed as He said in the Gospel today, “*One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.*” A good lesson: may we humbly approach God as St. John the Baptist did, and may we ask him to pray for us this Advent that we will be transformed in Christ and will confess our sins in the Sacrament of Confession, if we haven’t already done so, so we can receive the Lamb of God in Holy Communion **free of all mortal sin and in a spirit of faith and gratitude.** May the Lord not find us spiritually unprepared when He calls us from this passing earthly life, whenever that day occurs for each one of us, in His Divine Providence. God bless you. ✚

Recommended Resource:

Catholicism. The Complete Series 5 Disc Set. Fr. Robert Barron, from a few years back. See www.catholicismseries.com to watch the whole series for free. It can also be purchased at a big discount at www.amazon.com - a great Christmas gift for believer or unbeliever alike. It shows the beauty and splendor of the Catholic faith in a positive way – a great tool for evangelizing non-Catholics to the truth of our Faith and also to get lukewarm or lapsed non-practicing Catholics back to the fold.