**2 Advent 2024**

Happy New Year! Yes, last Sunday we ushered in the new Christian calendar year, and the celebration continues today and in the coming weeks before the secular calendar New Year. Advent is a short season, but it is a wonderful season. It bids us to prepare for the coming of the Lord, whether we are speaking of His coming at the end of time, at Christmas, at every celebration of the Eucharist, or at any time when the He enters the human breast.

Today we ponder what it means to be prepared. As a Boy Scout, the scout motto “Be prepared” has stuck with me my entire life. Working as a priest, as Fr. Christmas, as a pianist and songwriter requires constant and continual preparation and practice. You know this to be true in your own lives and occupations. Living and working with family and friends, everyday requires preparations with schedules and deadlines. This liturgy we are now enjoying required hours of preparation, in order to be beautiful and meaningful.

The most famous “preparer” in history—let’s call him the ‘Preparation Man’—was John the Baptist, and we remember him on this 2nd Sunday in Advent. John was Jesus’s cousin. He was destined to fulfill Isaiah’s prophecy as a voice crying in the wilderness and calling people to turn back to God. Repentance. Metanoia in Greek. It literally means to turn yourselves around and go in a new direction. Many of my Santa visitors come worried that they’re on the “Naughty List.” I always tell them that they’re mostly nice and sometimes naughty, but turning around and pushing the “reset button” on their heart gets them right back on the “Nice List.” They seem to get it.

The important thing about John was he was clear that it wasn’t about him. In fact, as you’ll recall, he’d literally lose his head for taking up the prophet’s mantle and embracing his call. He was called to “Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.” Matthew’s Jewish audience was well acquainted with the scroll of Isaiah and this passage extracted from an extended prophecy about the end-times restoration of Israel. Matthew confirms that John the Baptist is “the voice” to usher in the beginning of God’s glorious future kingdom with the arrival of a new kind of king. John’s role was to prepare the way for the advent of Good King Jesus, the High King.

When roads were built for kings in the ancient world, they were built as straight and smooth as the topography would allow. John, of course, is not speaking about a physical road but a spiritual road. Those who came to him to be baptized were being called to straighten out their lives and live for God and not for Caesar. A subversive and sometimes dangerous message in any age. Jesus didn’t baptize anyone. We are baptized into Jesus through the ministry of John the Baptist. Speaking of baptism, we will be baptizing and 8-month-old boy named Lukas on January 5th, the 12th Day of Christmas. He and his family recently moved to KOP from New Jersey, and are interested in being a part of our Trinity community. A fitting way to end the Christmas season and begin the new calendar year.

So my friends, there are lots of preparations we will be making in our lives as we journey to Christmas. I was well reminded of that two Fridays ago, when I got stuck in Black Friday traffic! In the midst of the busyness, the hustle and bustle, and the downright exhaustion of it all, let’s remember the deeper meaning of preparation. On your Christmas To Do List, by all means…

Buy presents, but more importantly be present to God and those you love and interact with.

Wrap gifts, but more importantly wrap people who need it in warm, grateful hugs.

Send gifts, but more importantly deliver peace in word and deed to everyone you meet.

Shop for food, but more importantly donate food for those less fortunate.

Go out and see the lights, but more importantly be the light for others in a dark world.

And have you heard, Sr. Kathy will be leading an Advent Quiet Day at Christ Church, Pottstown on Saturday, December 14th. We hope to see some of you there. It’s only about 30 minutes from here, and I drive it at least three times a week. No guilt, just encouragement! And always remember, as we make outward preparations for life’s endeavors in this season of hope and joy, there’s inward preparation that must be part of the equation. Don’t short change yourself on that part.

Let’s arrive here on Christmas Eve renewed, refreshed, and restored, with anticipation for a Blessed 2025 with the continued growth of our Trinity and Trinity School communities.

**May it be so.**