

SCC REFLECTION: 2nd SUNDAY ADVENT Year C. Lk 3:1-6. Fr Donal McIlraith

Sunday Text. Lk 3:1-6

[1] In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiber'i-us Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Iturae'a and Trachoni'tis, and Lysa'ni-as tetrarch of Abile'ne,

[2] in the high-priesthood of Annas and Ca'iaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechari'ah in the wilderness;

[3] and he went into all the region about the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

[4] As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

[5] Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth;

[6] and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Reflection:

1. In advent we celebrate the comings of Christ especially his first coming. His kinsman John the Baptist was the one who prepared the way for Jesus and baptized him when he first appeared in public. Advent draws attention to those who prepared the way for Jesus, especially Isaiah, John and Mary, his mother thus inviting us to prepare the way for him also.. For this and next Sun we learn about John and then the attention turns to Our Lady for the final Sunday. This is the Year of Luke so all the Sunday passages are taken from Luke.
2. Luke identifies carefully the time and place of the appearance of John. The Emperor Tiberius is mentioned, Pontius Pilate and

two of Herod the great's sons. We are told it was in the 15th year of Tiberius. Scholars debate but think this was in probably 28 AD. We know that Pontius was Procurator from 26 AD to 36 AD and this agrees with the Tiberius date. Caiaphas was High Priest from 18 to 36 AD. His Father-in Law, Annas, still ruled the roost and was often identified as the High Priest. All these details set John- and the Gospel in a clear Imperial and local setting.

3. "The word of the Lord came to John." This was the phrase used for the OT prophets so we can see that John is being presented to us as a prophet, indeed, the last of the prophets. A prophet reveals God's will to the people. John's task was to introduce Jesus. Before Jesus appeared, John preached repentance thus preparing people to meet Jesus. When they repented of their sins, he baptized them. This was a symbol of what was to come. Jesus took up this practice of baptism later and gave it to his disciples. John carried out his ministry of preaching and baptizing all long the Jordan valley.
4. Luke tells us that John's ministry was foretold by the Prophet Isaiah and quotes Isa 40:3-5. With this passage we are introduced to the third and final Exodus. The first Exodus we all know. God brought his people from the slavery of Egypt across the Red Sea to freedom. Isaiah was writing when the people were in exile in Babylon and he announced the second exodus. This is what Isa 40:3-5 is all about. He promises that God will build a road, a highway, through the desert for his people to return to Jerusalem from Babylon. And they did, finally return. Using this, Luke is telling us that the third and final Exodus is here. Indeed Jesus himself is the highway, not just to Jerusalem but to heaven! John the Baptist, Luke and Isaiah tell us, is the voice crying out to us all to prepare ourselves for Jesus because, it is he who will bring us final salvation, the glory that is heaven. A good Advent message.