

9 December 2007 – Advent 2 A - SH

The Key to Advent Blessings: Repent and Reform



Christ sent John the Baptist to announce his first coming 2000 years ago, because he wanted the people of Israel to be **ready to receive him**.

- ? He was coming to bring them **new hope, forgiveness, joy, interior peace, meaning and fruitfulness** - all the benefits of Redemption and grace.
- ? In Advent, we **remember** that first coming, in order to **thank** God for it.

But we also **re-live** that coming in the "**today**" of our own lives.

- ? This Christmas, Christ wants to make a **new surge of grace** in the world, in the Church, and in each one of our lives. He wants to **keep pouring out** those benefits of Redemption.
- ? And he wants us to be **ready to receive** this year's new surge of grace - he doesn't want us to **miss out** on it.
- ? And so, through the liturgy, he sends his messenger once again to teach us **how to get ready**.

Clearing the way for Christ to enter more deeply into our society and our lives means, first of all, **repenting**.

- ? To repent is to **turn away from selfish behavior patterns**.
- ? To repent means to **acknowledge our sins**.
- ? After all, how can we have **room** in our hearts for the coming of a **Savior** unless we are aware of our **need to be saved**?

But that's only the **first** step.

Preparing for Christ's coming also involves **positive action**, it means "**bearing good fruit**."

- ? **Active, self-forgetful service** towards our neighbor shows that our repentance is **real**.



- ? What good is **acknowledging** our selfishness and sin unless we also **decide to leave that sin behind**, and then make **concrete actions** to carry out that decision?

If we do these two things, **repent and reform**, we will be **ready** to experience the joys of the coming Kingdom in a **fresh way** this Christmas, just as Christ **wants** us to.

ILLUSTRATION: Getting the Right Stuff in the Canoe

Those of us here today **believe in Christ**, we have already **repented and reformed** - at **least a little bit**.

- ? And yet, God **wants more** from us.
- ? God loves us **too much** to let us settle for **spiritual mediocrity**.

Our lives are like **canoes**.



We fill our canoe up with as **much stuff** as we can, and we paddle along the **river of history**.

But God wants to give us things that we **can't give ourselves**:

- ? things like wisdom, joy, patience, courage and forgiveness,
- ? things like real meaning, lasting happiness, and peace of heart - he wants to **make us holy**.

So he has all these **wonderful things** he wants to put inside our canoe, but he **can't do it** unless we **empty out some of our petty little plastic treasures**.

- ? If our canoe is still **half-filled** with desires for comfort, vanity, empty pleasures, money, and worldly success, with hidden sins and habits of self-indulgence, there is **no room** for God's gifts.
- ? To **repent and to reform** is to **throw our selfish stuff overboard**, so God can fill us with **his** stuff.

If we don't do it **voluntarily**, God won't give up on us.

He will send us a **storm**, and as we struggle to keep the canoe **afloat** during the storm, the storm **itself** will **cast overboard** our petty **self-absorbed** habits and desires.

Jesus doesn't want to have to use a storm. He wants us to **trust him**, to make more **room** for him.

We have made a **good beginning** in our Christian life, but we're not **finished** yet, as Advent is meant to remind us.

APPLICATION: Rebooting Our Spiritual Life through Confession

God knows better than **anyone** how **hard** it can be for us to repent and reform.

- ? We live in a **fallen world**, and we have a **fallen human nature**.
- ? As a result, part of us is **drawn towards selfishness**, laziness, arrogance and self-indulgence as **naturally** as **falling acorns** are **drawn towards the earth**.
- ? We **absolutely need God's grace** to help **counteract** the **spiritual seriousness** of our selfish tendencies.



God knows this. And since he is **so eager** for us to come **closer** to him, so that we can experience and spread his blessings more and more, he has provided an solution.

He has given us the **sacraments, reservoirs of grace**. We can **always** go to them to **fill up our water bottles**. They are **free fountains of supernatural spring water**.

And one of them is dedicated **especially** to this fundamental Advent activity of **repenting and reforming**: the sacrament of confession.

God **invented** it and gave it to the Church in order to make the **difficult process of repenting and reforming** less difficult.

- ? Everything is **ready** for us.
- ? All we need to do is spend a few minutes **examining our conscience** to call to mind our **big sins** and also our **little habits of selfishness** that do so much **hidden damage**.
- ? Then we **kneel down** in the confessional (tomorrow) this afternoon at our Advent Penance Service and follow the lead of **Christ's ambassador**, the priest.

- ? Confession is like a **new baptism**, a **fresh start**, a **rebooting** of the spiritual life, a simple, concrete way that God has given us to let his grace and forgiveness **replenish** our **hope** and relieve our **anxiety**.
- ? Our Advent Penance Service is the only time there will be additional priests available – there will be 5 priests here this afternoon. If you need help examining your conscience, the pamphlet “Primer for Confession” and a “Confession Guide” for both children & adults in the pamphlet rack in the entryway.



God has **more blessings** that he is **eager to shower upon us**, and to send **through** us to others - let's **give him the chance**, let's renew our commitment to **repent and reform**. Let's meet Him in the Sacrament of Reconciliation – and discover peace in our own hearts, so that Christ's peace can begin to dwell in our homes and our world.

