

**Readings Isaiah 40: 1-5, 9-11; 2 Peter: 3, 8-14; Mark 1: 1-8**



**Fr Michael says:**

### **Preparing the Way of the Lord**

The call of John the Baptist echoes over the centuries to us, now, for us to step back, review where we are and see where the Lord is, in the midst of all that we do. Isaiah gives us a message of hope, in the midst of much darkness: He is coming to support and be with us in our journey of faith and life, as we go towards the fullness of the Kingdom, this message is taken up again by John, who proclaims Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, our response is one of repentance and renewal: despite all He will come!

Isaiah invites us to straighten our way of life, through honesty and good living, so there is also a personal straightness which we need to put in place too. Where are we in this perspective? How straight are we in our relationships with others? We find our way when we act with integrity, treating others fairly, attentiveness as to how we seem in our relationships with others. We remember the words of Micah, the prophet: “This is what God asks of you: that you act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with your God.” (6 / 8) We need those virtues of strength of mind and heart, wisdom and single-mindedness.

Our path will be challenging and uphill, but at the same time, our vision increases and widens! How do we measure in the light of this criterion? We can do a lot, but we are not alone, the Lord is with us, the dawn will come, as we journey we need a constant review of how clearly we see, how strong is our will to persevere and keep going along this challenging way – above all how warm is our heart as we make this journey? Do we see that the world is indeed flooded by grace, through the forthcoming Incarnation – the signs of the Kingdom are there, if we are open to them. How grounded are we in the present moment and savouring what is under our eyes, learning from the past, with a view to the future – to live fully our meeting with the Lord in the here and now?

John’s voice was a lonely one, often ignored by his contemporaries: we have the same situation now, many lonely voices calling to us: a child crying for love, for something to eat. Somewhere a young person is crying – for a listening ear or an understanding heart. Somewhere an old person is crying – for a visit or a word from his family. There are so many voices from the victims of injustice and neglect. Lord, help us to listen to these voices. Above all, help us listen to your voice, whispering to us in the wilderness of our hearts, telling us that we are loved by you – and that we are called to love one another!

## Reflection for 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent year B 2014



### Fr Tom says:

Are you still AWAKE? A week has flown by and now we are greeted with a fanfare. Enter John the Baptist, a fiery and somewhat scary bohemian (by today's standards) but his message is key. God uses him to be his herald of Good News. The call is to a change of heart and to prepare for the great event. So, being awake to the extraordinary in the not so obvious messenger is of utmost importance. And, being awake and aware, we move forward to active preparation clearing away the rubble and debris from our path, making ourselves ready to welcome and receive the greatest gift of God to us, Jesus Christ his Son.

This gift comes with power, a power to care, to cherish, protect and above all to love. This is a gift that evokes in us a cry or praise and thanksgiving that will issue forth from the very depth, the heart of our being. This gift we are happy to call a shepherd, a shepherd king. The past has been forgiven; the way ahead is a path to victory and glory.

This week we are reassured that everybody matters, everyone is valued and of value, no one will be left behind. This is what makes God so wonderful. Yes, there is reference to end times and that we must be ready, but, this Christmas Jesus comes to help us see all things anew; the true value of people and their inner suffering that makes them do inhuman things to their fellow humans, that people's anger and belligerence hides their inner fears and loneliness and the sense of lostness. And with this new vision comes an even greater desire to reach out and touch them with God's love, and freedom and forgiveness and peace who we call Jesus Christ.

And we begin this second week specially blessed as we are promised the Holy Spirit to help guide us on our way and lift us up over any barrier or fear that may stand in our path. We begin this second week with confidence and a growing desire to make this coming of Christ for us the best ever in our lives – because that is its promise.

### **Memory Awakens Hope**

*"Advent is concerned with that very connection between memory and hope which is so necessary to man. Advent's intention is to awaken the most profound and basic emotional memory within us, namely, the memory of the God who became a child. This is a healing memory; it brings hope. The purpose of the Church's year is continually to rehearse her great history of memories, to awaken the heart's memory so that it can discern the star of hope...."*

*It is the beautiful task of Advent to awaken in all of us memories of goodness and thus to open doors of hope." Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Seek That Which Is Above, 1986*