

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Preparation for Christmas

“Make ready the way of the Lord” (Luke, 3:4)

Almighty God assigned to Saint John the Baptist the important task of announcing the beginning of the missionary activities of Our Divine Lord. Previous prophets had foretold that the Redeemer was to come at some future time; **to John was given the privilege of proclaiming that He actually had come.** This was the divinely assigned role of John in the great work of man’s redemption. When he had accomplished this, his part was ended, and he died a martyr’s death at the hands of the wicked and lustful King Herod.

The message of John included the admonition: ***“Make straight his paths ... the crooked shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth.”*** In these metaphorical expressions we see the ardent desire of the Almighty that the human race would be fully prepared for the coming of His Son. Just as loyal citizens, preparing to greet their chief ruler, straighten out the roads and fill in the depressions in the highways, so in God’s plan men were to remove sin from their souls and dispose themselves with faith and love for the Messiah, soon to appear among His fellow men to accomplish the work of Redemption.

Today the Catholic Church proclaims to her members the same message that was spoken by Saint John the Baptist: ***“Make ready the way of the Lord.”*** The Church desires all her children to greet our Divine Saviour on Christmas Day with their hearts **fully disposed** to welcome Him.

The Church bids us to go back in spirit to the days before Christ actually came to earth and to renew in our souls the spirit of intense longing and ardent desire for the Redeemer, who is to renew all things and repair the harm done by sin. The **preparation** which is most essential is to greet Our Lord on Christmas morning with a pure heart, prepared to receive Him in Holy Communion.

The way to attain this purity of heart is the devout and humble reception of the sacrament of Penance. This sacrament will give us the purity of soul that is so essential a preparation for meeting the God of infinite holiness in the intimacy of Holy Communion. Through a good confession **“the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways smooth.”**

Practical Application

Today make the firm resolution to go to **confession** before Christmas and to receive Holy Communion devoutly on the day of Our Saviour’s birth. This is the most acceptable Christmas gift you could give to the Child of Bethlehem.