

The Message of John the Baptist

What was the message of John the Baptist? Isaiah 40 tells us in the prophecy of a voice of one crying in the desert: "Prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God! Every valley shall be lifted up, every mountain and hill made low; the rugged land shall be a plain, the rough country, a broad valley. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together" (Isaiah 40:3-5).

Who is the "LORD" that the people were to prepare for? In the context of the passage in Isaiah 40:3, the "LORD" refers to God Himself. The Gospels use this verse from Isaiah 40 as a prophecy for the coming of Jesus Christ, with John the Baptist fulfilling the role of "the voice of one crying in the desert." How did John the Baptist tell the people to prepare for the coming of the Lord? Matthew 3 tells us in simple terms, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matthew 3:2)

How was the message of John the Baptist received by the people?

1. There were those who believed what John said and came to him for baptism: Mark 1 tells us that "people of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins" (Mark 1:5) Luke tells us that even tax collectors and soldiers came to be baptized by John (Luke 3:12-14).
2. There were those who heard what John said and liked to listen to John but did not repent: Mark 6 tells us that Herod Antipas feared John, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man, and kept him in custody. When he heard him speak he was very much perplexed, yet he liked to listen to him (Mark 6:20).
3. There were those who wished harm to John: Herodias harbored a grudge against him and wanted to kill him but was unable to do so (Mark 6:19).
4. There were those who rejected what John said: Jesus said to the crowds about John, "The Pharisees and scholars of the law, who were not baptized by him, rejected the plan of God for themselves (Luke 7:30).



John's message for us is pure and straightforward: The Messiah is coming! Repent, so that you may be prepared to meet him! Let us reflect on this: How am I going to receive John's message? Am I going to believe what John said and repent? Or am I going to like what John said but do nothing about it? Or am I not going to let it bother me right now and ignore it?

What constitutes true repentance? Is it just feeling sorry for one's sins, or is it something more? Repentance is a radical reorientation of one's whole life; it is a conversion and a return to God with all our heart; it is an end of one's sinful ways, a turning away from evil, and a repugnance toward sin. At the same time, it entails the desire and resolution to change one's life, with hope in God's mercy and trust in the help of His grace. (CCC 1431)

St. Paul talks about the "circumcision of the heart" (cf. Romans 2:25-29, Colossians 2:11-13). One of the fruits of true repentance is a "circumcised heart." The "circumcised heart" refers to having a pure heart that is separated from sin and set apart for God. Some people say, "I believe in Christ and I am willing to change, but I don't see any progress. Am I doing something wrong?" The fruits of repentance are not something we can force ourselves to achieve; it is always a grace that comes from above – in God's time, in God's way. In the meantime, we must not walk in darkness, because if we walk in the light of Christ, His blood cleanses us from all our sins. (1John 1:6-7) John points a finger not at us to make us feel guilty and depressed, but to Jesus Christ, who is coming to change our lives!

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PARISH ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception on December 9, Monday, is a holy day of obligation in the Archdiocese of Atlanta. Mass in English will be at 12:00 noon.

Attention children and parents: We will have Sunday School this Sunday, December 8. Parents are welcome to sit in the Sunday School classes. No class on December 15, but rehearsal for the Sunday School Christmas Pageant will be on December 22.

Potluck on December 15 has been moved to Christmas Day.



Mass at Midnight on December 24 will begin at 11:30pm. Mass on Christmas Day and Sunday School Christmas Pageant will begin at 10:30am. Mass will be followed by Potluck, Santa Claus, Christmas Program and raffle.

Attention parents and gift-givers! Please remember to bring your Christmas gifts on Christmas Day and place them under the Christmas tree in the social hall. This way, Santa Claus will have your gifts ready to give away!

On December 21, Saturday, Fr. Wu Biao will lead our Advent retreat. The Advent retreat begins at 10:00 am and ends at 4:00 pm. Lunch will be provided at noon. The next day, Sunday, Fr. Wu will preside over the Sunday mass and will do a sharing with everyone after Mass. Fr. Wu is from Shanxi, China, and is currently working on a master's degree at Seton Hall University in New Jersey.

Thank you to everyone who supported our church during Giving Tuesday. Total donations to our church was \$5,115.

We have enough volunteers for "Helping Mamas." Thank you to all our volunteers! Please take note that our church's volunteer date is January 11, 2025 from 9:00 to 11:00am.



Reserve the date: Fr. Bill encourages all parishioners to make plans to participate in the Eucharistic Congress in Atlanta next year on June 20-21, 2025. Our church will host the first-ever Chinese Track in the Eucharistic Congress. We have invited the Most Reverend John Lee Juo-wang, Bishop Emeritus of the diocese of Tainan, Taiwan and Fr. Francis Ching of the Companions of the Cross based in Toronto, Canada as guest speakers. We have also invited a Chinese band led by Mr. Jianren Zhu from Los Angeles.

Mass Schedule	Confessions	Bible Study
Sundays 10:30 AM (Chinese)	Sundays 9:00-9:30 AM	Wednesdays 10:00 AM (Chinese)
Sundays 2:00 PM (English)	Tuesdays 2:00-3:00 PM	Mondays 6:00 PM (English)
	By Appointment	
Mondays 12:00 PM (English)		Eucharistic Adoration
Tuesdays 12:00 PM (English)	Anointing of the Sick	Sundays 9:30 AM to 12:00 PM
Wednesdays 12:00 PM (Chinese)	First Sundays after 10:30 AM Mass	Tuesdays 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM
Fridays 12:00 PM (English)		
First Friday 7:00 PM (English)		
First Saturday 10:00 AM (Chinese)		