Called to Be like John the Baptist

God calls us to live our life in union with him. Therefore, he sent people to become instruments of our spiritual growth as persons who are destined for his love. His only desire is for all of us to be ONE with him regardless of our status, religion, culture, or race.

In this season of Advent, God invites us again to live our life acceptable into his kingdom. He uses John the Baptist to be the forerunner of Christ. John’s divine calling is to prepare the way of the Lord by preaching repentance to people, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. As his life is totally centered on God, we are called to also live our divine calling, which is to follow Jesus the Christ. Repentance is the core message of Jesus’ preaching for it is the path toward encountering God. Christ has come for us sinners that he may bring healing to our wounded souls, liberate us from sin, and offer us eternal life. How can he give his grace of healing, liberation, and eternal life if we ourselves are not ready to repent? As a matter of fact, the essence of our response to Christ lies in our ability to see within our hearts the power of his grace and love. It is difficult to welcome him into our lives if our hearts are not contrite. Hence, we are called to admit our sins, turn away from them, and then embrace his loving mercy and live our divine calling.

To sustain this, God calls us to always turn him in the desert of our hearts. In fact, John’s preaching in the desert symbolizes his deep encountering with God. Figuratively, desert is a place of divine encounter. It is a privileged place for John to have deep moments of prayer. Desert could be the inner self where God’s voice resides. It is where we can experience inner silence. To enter the barrenness of the desert is to really empty ourselves and put all our trust in the Lord who can truly fill our life.

If we look at how John lived his life, we can find that Jesus was his point of reference. We too are called to live a life as John lived and make Jesus our reason for living our divine purpose. Let us be instruments of God’s merciful and loving presence to others, especially those in need of repentance.

Prayer: Lord, help me live my divine calling as I welcome YOU into my life. Amen.

Br. Erwin Sayson, SC

Pastoral Catechesis for the Year of Ecumenism, Interreligious Dialogue, and Indigenous People

Turning Our Gaze to the World

— Fr. James H. Kroeger, MM

The Second Vatican Council, held in Rome in 1962-1965, was a pivotal turning point in the Church’s 2,000 years of history. Epitaphs by respected theologians have described the Council as “the most significant Church assembly of the twentieth century” and as “the most important event in the history of the Roman Catholic Church since the Protestant Reformation” in the 1500s. Vatican II had among its participants five popes (John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul I, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI). Three of these popes (John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul II) have been declared “canonized saints” by the Church under the leadership of Pope Francis.

Pope John XXIII, following the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, summoned Vatican II on January 25, 1959, the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul. He coined a new Italian word to capture his vision: aggiornamento. This term envisaged a new openness on the part of the Church toward the world, other Christian churches (ecumenism), and other world religions (interreligious dialogue). Through this engagement with people and the world, the Church seeks to share and promote her teachings and wisdom, her Gospel values, her faith in Jesus Christ.
THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon
[ Cf. Is 30:19, 30]
(Recited when there is no opening song)

O people of Sion, behold, the Lord will come to save the nations, and the Lord will make the glory of his voice heard in the joy of your heart.

Lighting of the Advent Candles
The lighting of the second candle of the Advent wreath may be made after the entrance song, with the following or similar prayer:

P — Father, as we journey down this Advent road, we relight the candle of hope, and light the second candle of Advent that symbolizes peace. Grant us your peace: peace in our hearts, peace in our homes, and peace in our communities.

All — Amen.

Greeting
(The sign of the cross is made here)

P — The Lord be with you.
All — And with your spirit.

Introduction
(The priest may address the assembly with these or other similar words)

P — The Second Sunday of Advent introduces to us the figure of John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord. The word of the Lord summons John from the desert, and the prophet begins his ministry of preparing the people for the Messiah who, though yet to be revealed, is already in their midst.

Penitential Act

P — Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries. (Pause)
All — I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, (strike your breast) through my fault, through my fault,
all the tribes of the earth be blessed;/ all the nations shall proclaim his happiness. (R) 

Second Reading (Rom 15:4–9)
Just as people of old waited patiently for the Savior, so Christians must wait for the return of the Lord Jesus. We must never be lacking in patience and hope.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

BROTHERS AND SISTERS: Whatever was written previously was written for our instruction, that by endurance and by the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think in harmony with one another, in keeping with Christ Jesus, that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the Lord and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God. For I say that Christ became a minister of the circumcision to show God’s truthfulness, to confirm the promises to the patriarchs, but so that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written: Therefore, I will praise you among the Gentiles and sing praises to your name.
— The word of the Lord.
All — Thanks be to God.

Alleluia [Lk 3:4, 6] (Stand)

All — Alleluia, alleluia. Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths: all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel (Mt 3:1–12)

P — A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew
All — Glory to you, O Lord.

JOHN THE BAPTIST appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: A voice of one crying out in the desert, Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. John wore clothing made of camel’s hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. Even now the axe lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”
— The Gospel of the Lord.
All — Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily (Sit)

Profession of Faith (Stand)

All — I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, (at the words that follow, up to and including and became man, all bow) and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayer of the Faithful

P — Let us harken to John the Baptist’s cry to prepare the way of the Lord. In expectant longing and joy for the Master’s coming, we pray to our loving Father:
R — Father, hear our prayer.
C — May Pope Francis, bishops, priests, consecrated men and women, and lay leaders serve as faithful heralds of God’s designs, even in cases when they become lonely voices in the desert. We pray: (R)
C — May we allow neither the sins and scandals in our family life and in the Church nor the corruption in our society to overcome the goodness and goodwill in our hearts, we pray: (R)
C — May Filipino Catholic families cherish the faith they possess and share it to others in word and deed. We pray: (R)
C — May the Lord give comfort to the dying and welcome the souls of the faithful departed to the joy of paradise. We pray: (R)
C — Let us pray for the urgent concerns of our community and our personal intentions (pause), we pray: (R)
P — Father, give us the will and courage to remove the
obstacles that hinder our encounter with you and with one another. May we prepare for your Son’s coming with joy and anticipation.

Through Christ our Lord.
All — Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Presentation of the Gifts (Stand)
P — Pray, brethren...
All — May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for your good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings
P — Be pleased, O Lord, with our humble prayers and offerings, and, since we have no merits to plead our cause, come, we pray, to your rescue with the protection of your mercy.

Through Christ our Lord.
All — Amen.

Preface I of Advent
P — The Lord be with you.
All — And with your spirit.
P — Lift up your hearts.
All — We lift them up to the Lord.
P — Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
All — It is right and just.
P — It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord.

For he assumed at his first coming the lowliness of human flesh, and so fulfilled the design you formed long ago, and opened for us the way to eternal salvation, that, when he comes again in glory and majesty and all is at last made manifest, we who watch for that day may inherit the great promise in which now we dare to hope.

And so, with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominions, and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven, we sing the hymn of your glory, as without end we acclaim:

All — Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

(Stand)

Accolamation
All — When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord’s Prayer
P — Our Father...
All — Deliver us, Lord...
All — For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever.

Invocation to Peace
P — Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.
All — Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon (Bar 5:5; 4:36)
Jerusalem, arise and stand upon the heights, and behold the joy which comes to you from God.

Prayer after Communion (Stand)
P — Let us pray. (Pause)
Replenished by the food of spiritual nourishment, we humbly beseech you, O Lord, that, through our partaking in this mystery, you may teach us to judge wisely the things of earth and hold firm to the things of heaven.

Through Christ our Lord.
All — Amen.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

P — The Lord be with you.
All — And with your spirit.

Prayer over the People
P — Bow your heads and pray for God’s blessings. (Pause)
Be propitious to your people, O God, that, freed from every evil, they may serve you with all their heart and ever stand firm under your protection.

Through Christ our Lord.
All — Amen.

P — May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, (t) and the Holy Spirit.
All — Amen.

Dismissal
P — Go in peace.
All — Thanks be to God.