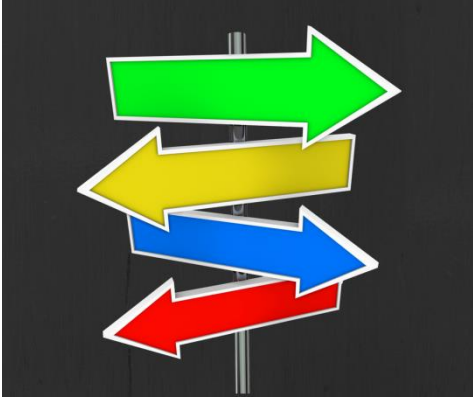




# ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

**THIS SUNDAY December 16 & BEYOND”**

## **“Following Directions to the Right Outcome”**



“The world is coming to an end. Jesus is coming.” I have said that out loud before, but I never attracted any attention by it. Nor did anybody say, “When?” or “Tell me more” (well, except in bible study classes, and those people were sitting down with me already).

But there are certain people who seem to be able to draw a crowd when talking about the end times, and will listen intently while the speaker goes on and elaborates. We say those speakers are those with “charismatic appeal”, where “charismatic” means something like exercising a compelling charm which inspires devotion in others: Perhaps in some cases, it means mesmerizing.

Our Gospel reading for Sunday, December 16, which is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent this year, tells about St. John the Baptist finally appearing according to prophecy from before he was born, out in the wilderness beyond Jerusalem, on the other side of the Jordan River. He’s talking loudly about the coming of the Messiah, about repentance, about life and death, the wrath of God coming to the People of God (not just the rest of the world!). And people are FLOCKING to hear him.

“MULTITUDES came out” not just to hear him, but were influenced to actually do what he was telling them. He told them to REPENT, be BAPTIZED for the repentance, and then go do things for other people. I’m not convinced that the charismatic definition of either “compelling charm” or “mesmerizing” would fit, although by all accounts he was quite the sight to behold. But there was something....

Yes, there was “something on him” as some people say. People came from near and far. And they didn’t just pass him by, or turn around and go home, without seriously considering what he was saying. Not everybody who stands on a street corner with a sign that says, “Repent!” has that response. This something on him was the Holy Spirit of God: the Holy Spirit was on him from before he was born, God had His will spoke out by others – including an angel – and planted within him

from his very beginnings; the Holy Spirit led him to the wilderness; the Holy Spirit told him what his message was to be, and he spoke it; the Holy Spirit alerted him to see Jesus as the Lamb of God when Jesus also came to the Jordan River.

But if you didn't already know all that had brought John to the wilderness to preach, what else might tell you that, at the least, there was something authentic about this guy? What would tell you that all these people – multitudes! - weren't in fact just being mesmerized by this charismatic figure? There's enough bad stuff going on in the world, in every facet of our lives. We don't need to be detoured, to get off on the wrong road.

I do a lot of driving, both long-distance and around town. I have seen a lot of directional signs. And mis-direction, unfortunately. The clearest directions usually have an arrow, and a more luminous color. And then even if it is clear, if you are not paying attention, you finally WILL be paying attention when you go right on by the exit or turn!

When we're talking about whether the voice of one crying in the wilderness is a clear road sign or just being mesmerizing, it all has to do with the pointing. And very clearly with John the Baptist, he did not point to himself. He pointed beyond himself, to the one who was coming, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, the Messiah. The people wondered whether John was himself the one to come. And his answer was simple, and pointed, **"I baptize with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming.... he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."**

And then shortly after he began his proclamations and preaching, Jesus did come to the Jordan. Jesus will be coming again! And it is now our turn to wait and watch and be prepared. While we wait, we are to continue to follow John's directions, which have been repeated by Jesus himself, and those Apostolic witnesses and teachers following Jesus. We are to do these things: Repent, Be Baptized in water (but now in Jesus' name), and receive Jesus' baptism with the Holy Spirit. We will then be in practice, in our own right, those who proclaim the Kingdom coming. You won't know if perhaps your ministry is intended by God to be heard by multitudes until you do it.

Fr. Robert G. Eaton, Interim Rector

Readings for this Sunday – The Third Sunday of Advent — Rose Sunday  
Baruch Zephaniah 3:14-20 Psalm 85:7-13 Philippians 4:4-9 Luke 3:7-18

## CALENDAR

### SUNDAY: **The Third Sunday of Advent — Rose Sunday**

8:00a Low Mass (Church)

10:30a Solemn High Mass (Church)

9:00a-1:00pm Holiday Cookie and Book Sale (Parish Hall)

—*The entrance to the church is on 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue*—

*Note: Coffee Hour & Fellowship follow the Mass in the Parish Hall.*

MONDAY: 7:00p (AA) Doctors' Group (Fireside Room)

TUESDAY: Noon Mass (St. Mary's Chapel)

FRIDAY: AA Meetings

8:00p Ladies' Group (Fireside Room)

8:15p Men's Group (Parish Hall)