

The Rectory,  
Greenwood Lane,  
St Fagans,  
CF5 6EL  
[curateofradyr@gmail.com](mailto:curateofradyr@gmail.com)  
02920 567956

Dear Friends

## Advent 2

As you know, Advent is a penitential season, a time to reflect and to examine our hearts, a time to try and put an end to those things which have hindered our relationship with God and with each other.

Our Advent journey has already begun! Last week marked the start of a new liturgical year and this year we will be exploring Mark's Gospel. Last week's reading began, not at the beginning but at chapter thirteen – almost the end, as Mark's gospel is only 16 chapters! That was very apt, as that reading is known as 'the little apocalypse'. It spoke of people's suffering, but also of the hope that Christ will return in Glory. And all this was felt to happen soon, hence the themes of waiting, watching, being awake and preparing. So this week we go forward focusing on preparing, looking towards hope, but with a strong sense of ending in mind.



As our journey continues, this week we find ourselves at the beginning where the good news is announced. Mark, as concise as ever, tells us the most important point we need to know - the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As we read on, holding that sense of ending and beginning in our minds, we find ourselves in the wilderness. Endings are often accompanied by a time of wilderness and this is where we can find ourselves again, reset our compass and gain strength.

Our guide on this journey is John the Baptizer, and we couldn't be in safer hands, for this is a man who understands the wilderness well. John, we are told, dressed in camel's hair, wore a leather belt and lived on locusts and honey, but this is more than a mere description of his outer appearance, it is a description of his inner heart, simple and humble. John had let go of pretence and preoccupation, he had a job to do. He was the forerunner; he was preparing the way for the Lord, that was his calling. John tells us 'I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals'. This is not about John, he's not the Messiah, it is about Jesus Christ who is all powerful, the good news, the son of God.



With the words from Isaiah "see, I am sending my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way.... and make straight his paths", John provides us with a signpost on our journey. It had been many years since a prophet had spoken so the people would travel to see John, the last of the great prophets, and it is here that they are invited to accept the call of repentance, repentance which is about changing one's mind, having a change of heart.

During this Advent we are invited to reflect on our thoughts and our actions. What is it that gives us life? And what is it that drains us? Often we cling on to things even if they are not life giving; they become familiar, a habit, and remaining with the familiar is often more comfortable. This can appear easier initially, but before long the path becomes arduous. On the other hand, entering into the unknown may initially be a difficult path because it requires us to become vulnerable, it can be overwhelming and even make us feel fearful because calling an end to something in our life often feels this way, but this path may become straight in time.

In the wilderness we have the opportunity to let go of what was and embrace what is, knowing, as John reminds us, the one who is and was and is to come is more powerful than I. The wilderness is a place we share with our ancestors, it is hugely significant - it is part of salvation history from the time the Israelites journeyed to the promised land, to Jesus who is baptised by John who then enters straight into his own wilderness, resists temptation before emerging to begin his ministry. The wilderness is an in-between place where the old has gone but the new hasn't started just yet – the in-between time of waiting and preparing ourselves, and this is where we find ourselves at this time.

Wilderness time can be difficult but it is time well spent as this is where we can truly prepare the way of the Lord and make ready our hearts and minds, the place where we learn more about ourselves, our true selves who we are called to be in Christ.

So let us not close the path or put up a diversion by being busy and preoccupied with stuff. Let's spend time in the wilderness; let's not be too hasty to leave.

## **Love in Christ**

### **Belinda**

I share with you a piece for reflection by one of my favourite writers, the wonderful Malcom Guite

### **St. John the Baptist: 1 St. John's Eve**

Midsummer night, and bonfires on the hill  
Burn for the man who makes way for the Light:  
'He must increase and I diminish still,  
Until his sun illuminates my night.'  
So John the Baptist pioneers our path,  
Unfolds the essence of the life of prayer,  
Unlatches the last doorway into faith,  
And makes one inner space an everywhere.  
Least of the new and greatest of the old,  
Orpheus on the threshold with his lyre,  
He sets himself aside, and cries "Behold  
The One who stands amongst you comes with fire!"  
So keep his fires burning through this night,  
Beacons and gateways for the child of light.

