

Homily for the 2nd Sunday of Advent (Year A)

December 6th, 2025, 6.00pm Ballarat East, 9.00 am Gordon & 10.30am Ballan (baptisms)

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John the Baptist features on this 2nd Sunday of Advent, so he easily fulfills my challenge each week of Advent to offer you a visual image to stimulate or provoke, amplifies or relates to the Scripture proclaimed in the liturgy of the day.

This icon of the Baptist – has captured my imagination since I first saw it some years ago on a Holy Land pilgrimage when visiting Ein Karem, the village just outside Jerusalem (*the hill country of Judea*) where tradition holds that Elizabeth and Zechariah lived and where John was born.

Though the icon has captured my imagination, I could never say I liked it or was drawn to it and if anything, it's disturbing. When I read Mary Coloe's commentary on this section of Matthew's Gospel¹, she helped me understand why it disturbs me. She asks

If John appeared in our Churches today what would we make of him? Smile at his delusion? Be embarrassed by his challenge? Be angered by the upset to our normal religious routines? If these questions cause discomfort, John caused discomfort in his time, so much so that he was thrown into prison and executed. John preaches the coming of God. Nothing about him is attractive – the environment is the harsh Judean wilderness; his clothes and food are bizarre and

¹ Mary Coloe PBVM, *Sundays under the Southern Cross: Gospel Reflections for Years A, B & C* (Mulgrave: Garratt Publishing, 2023).

his message 'Repent' is hardly an advertising slogan. And yet people come to him. Jerusalem, all Judea and the whole Jordan district go to him for baptism. People can recognise truth. It may not be attractive, some may prefer to avoid it, but we cannot fully hide from the truth. John speaks to the truth of God. God is near. God is coming. Is your life open to receiving God?

The Judean wilderness, where all of Jerusalem, Judea and people of the Jordan district went to listen to John seems the ideal environment for him – a vast, wide, open, silent, empty place. For the people of Israel, the ancestors of Jesus, the wilderness was the place of encounter with the God of the Covenant. It was in the desert that God spoke to their hearts. In the wilderness they entered into the covenant, where they received the Law of Moses. Through their wilderness years their identity as God's people was formed and out of the wilderness they were led to the promised land.

For Israel, the wilderness came to be the place of encounter with the Mystery of God, free of human control, wide open space, unmapped territory, undomesticated and still free – like John the Baptist? The wilderness contrasted to the place where they'd been – Pharaoh's Egypt where they were slaves. For the people of Israel, the wilderness symbolised God's willingness to liberate from all that enslaves and it became the place where the call to live faithfully as God's people would be heard.

So it's appropriate that the word of God should come again to the people in the wilderness. John is that voice speaking in the wilderness. We hear it especially during the time of Advent when as a community we are disturbed by this prophet who calls us to a change of heart, urging us to prepare a way for the Lord.

Advent, according to Richard Rohr OFM, is a time for being **aware, alive, attentive, alert** and **awake**². Maybe for us, this Advent could be a time to be aware, alive, attentive, alert and awake to the presence of God to prepare a way for **God with us**.

² <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/franciscan-spirit-blog/advent-with-richard-rohr-first-sunday/>