



Second Week of Advent (Sunday Year A) – Reflection Mgr Daniel McHugh
4th & 5th December 2022

“Prepare the way of the Lord.”

For my Easter break this year I was blessed to achieve one of my dreams: to visit Puglia in Italy with a special focus on Bari and the Shrine of St Nicholas. As it happens, his memorial is the coming week on 6th December. The date of his death is the year 343 at the time of the Emperor Diocletian. He was Bishop of Myra in present-day Turkey and participated in the famous Council of Nicaea in 325.

His fame grew and the story of his charity in secretly giving bags of gold coins to the poor family of three girls who needed dowries to save them from prostitution. Hence him becoming patron of children and the origin of presents being given to them on his Feast. The name “Santa Klaus” is derived from the Dutch dialect form for his name: Sinterklaas. Presents still are given in some countries on the day, though the larger gifts would be given at Christmas.

In 1087 at the time of Seljuk Turks taking over Myra, the relics of St Nicholas were taken to Bari in Puglia where a wonderful Basilica was built in his honour: from that time onwards especially, the popular devotion to St Nicholas spread across Europe and beyond.

The generosity of St Nicholas is a special inspiration at this time of Advent, and particularly in the second week when we dwell on the call of St John the Baptist to Repentance. Like most people we can focus mostly on what we want for Christmas rather than turning from self to the needs of others. It is here in particular that the commemoration of St Nicholas can encourage a new and more generous way of preparing for the Birth of Our Lord, as we seek to follow His way of service and care for those in need.

The most common St Nicholas Day tradition is for children to leave their shoes out hoping St Nicholas will leave them a small present. There are many ways of celebrating St Nicholas Day that can be updated with a contemporary twist. For example, one particular German tradition is for children to dress up like St Nicholas and collect money for the poor.

I will be suggesting to the Hong Kong families this Sunday 4 December when we are having Christmas Family celebrations to think together about how they can reach out in care and love to those with some need. There is a great opportunity here to create our own unique family traditions leading up to Christmas morning. St Nicholas Day is a way this can be moved forward to each year. This can be accompanied by putting up decorations; setting up a family crib with a “bambinello” and enjoying gourmet treats.

Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese



When we look to the Sunday Scripture for the 2nd Sunday of Advent we have real challenges from St John the Baptist who is urging us to be like the Christ whose Birth we will be celebrating. “Repent” says John for the Kingdom of Heaven is close at hand: that Kingdom is made manifest in Jesus. It means changing our minds and hearts to be like Him. We are called to produce fruit in our lives, not just pay lip service with the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to John for Baptism.

St Paul in the Reading from the letter to the Romans for the second Sunday calls us to “treat each other in the same friendly way as Christ treated you”. That is the challenge we are faced with at our Christmas Confession. In the Prophet Isaiah we are urged to look to the root of Jesse (the Lord Himself) who stands as a signal to all peoples: “on him the spirit of the Lord rests, the spirit of wisdom and insight, a spirit of counsel and power, a spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord”.

This is the challenge to us adults as we prepare for the celebration of the Lord’s Birth, and his coming again at the end of time.

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