

ADVENT REFLECTION 2016

Week 2: Repentance

SCRIPTURE

In due course John the Baptist appeared: he preached in the wilderness of Judaea and this was his message:

'Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is close at hand.'

Matthew 3:1

He shall save the poor when they cry and the needy who are helpless.

He will have pity on the weak and save the lives of the poor.

Psalms 71: 12-13



REFLECTION

A knock-on effect of the recession has been an alarming rise of in the number of food banks opening up around the country. Young people, unable to find work; families existing as best they can on or below the poverty line; those in low income jobs; elderly people struggling to make ends meet: all age groups are turning to local food banks for survival.

The benefit system fails to keep up with inflation, so a small amount of money must go even further: for some an impossible goal. As always the most vulnerable are the hardest hit – penalised for being poor.

At Christmas time financial pressures may escalate to an unbearable level, often forcing parents into the hands of loan sharks just to buy toys for their children. Credit Unions can play a valuable role, but borrowing is only possible if some cash has already been invested so those who need help most may be excluded – a Catch 22 situation.

By contrast there is also great wealth. Some of the richest people and the most profitable companies take advantage of schemes and loopholes to avoid paying their fair share of taxes: legally permissible but morally reprehensible.

ACTION IDEAS

- Volunteer at a Drop-in Centre for homeless people or help at a Soup Kitchen.
- Help out at a local Food Bank or Credit Union.
- Buy locally produced or fairly traded goods - avoid companies who use off-shore tax-dodging facilities.
- Spend less on presents and make a donation to Housing Justice www.housingjustice.org.uk or to Church Action on Poverty www.church-poverty.org.uk
- Invite someone who is lonely or new to your area to share a meal or help organise a parish Christmas lunch.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

In a world where great value is put on having more and being more it takes humility and courage to let go of our own personal ambitions and desires and shift the focus to loving God and our neighbour.

- Am I too self-centred, too set in my ways, too comfortable with my own situation to fully live the Gospel message?
- Do I push God to one side for fear of being asked to make radical changes to my current lifestyle?
- How best can I to respond to the needs of those around me who are less fortunate?

ACT OF REPENTANCE

Lord, I see injustice all around yet feel powerless to help: the problems seem too big to overcome and my voice feels too small to make a difference.

For the times I have failed to act to help build a fairer society and thought only of myself, I ask your forgiveness.

For the times that my greed and selfishness may have caused the gap between rich and poor to widen, I ask your forgiveness.

For the times I have mistaken superiority and self-righteousness for loving charity, I ask your forgiveness.

Open my eyes, Lord, to see how my actions may adversely affect those around me.

Open my ears, Lord, to hear the cries of the poor and needy.

Open my heart, Lord, to act in love and solidarity with my brothers and sisters throughout the world.