



Things to Ponder

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Second Sunday of Advent – Matthew 3:1-12

Dear Friends,

Once again, the haunting figure of John the Baptist is presented to us in Holy Scripture. Not only did he look and smell like someone who had been hiking on the Appalachian Trail for months; but his words to the respected leaders were unusually harsh. He called them a *brood of vipers*. Such a phrase is reminiscent of the venomous creatures that attacked the Israelites on their journey through the desert en route to the Promised Land. He did not regard their repentance as sincere and demanded evidence.

The Greek word for repentance is *metanoia*. It literally means *going beyond the mind you have*. Conversion (*metanoia*) is a life-long process. What inhibits this growth? First and foremost, we are not at peace with ourselves. What fear, resentment, or confusion prevents me from forgetting myself and being immersed in life? Once I have begun to be reconciled within, I can allow the grace of the One who baptized me with fire and the Holy Spirit to blossom. Then, and only then, am I empowered to seek justice in my relationships with others and with all of creation.

The Holy Father's encyclical, *Laudato Si*, is a profound reflection upon this process and a beautiful contemporary rendition of St. Francis' *Canticle of the Creatures*. Isn't this the vision of Isaiah and a concrete example of the hope that is Advent?

Yours in the One-to-Come,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Bill Foley

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