

**Second Sunday of Advent -2019-20 - A**  
**Isaiah 11.1-10///Romans 15.4-9///Matthew 3.1-12**

→recently I came across a newspaper item that reported on a very unusual experience.

→it dealt with removing unwanted tattoos...especially gang related ones from the bodies of young people.

→now the surprising thing about this article is that after it appeared the response to it was overwhelming...thousands of letters flooded in from all kinds of people asking for more information about it.

→and because of this remarkable response...a documentary film was even produced called *Untattoo You*...

→it tells about the dangers of amateur tattooing and showed how difficult it was to remove small tattoos from arms and faces and larger ones from chests and backs.

→the stars of the film were many young people themselves...and they talked frankly about why they were tattooed in the first place and why they now wanted the tattoos removed.

→now the story behind the film *Untattoo You* illustrates an important point...

→all of us have done things in our lives that we now regret and would like to erase

→I'm sure every one of us...could recall at least a half a dozen things we have done that we would like to erase from our lives if we could

→we all know that the world we live in is not perfect and neither are we...and that is why this season of Advent each year is so important and meaningful to us....

→because Advent reminds us that there is a better world and a better life to come...one that someday we will live in and rejoice...and until then we have the capacity to erase all the pain we might cause....

→and today, our scripture readings point to this better place...this better existence

→the prophet Isaiah, in today's first reading announces that

→a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from *its roots a branch will bear fruit...the spirit of God will rest on him....the wolf will be the guest of the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the kid, the calf and the young lion will browse together and the cow and bear shall be neighbors.*"

→all in all, Isaiah describes what is to come...a world of peace and justice and harmony

→from Romans...we are told to "*endure and have courage so that we might have hope....*

→[and] Matthew continues this theme....as we are told to *make straight our paths...prepare the way....get ready for the coming of the Lord.*

PAUSE

→all three of our readings ...then.....challenge us to straighten out our lives....to resolve the conflicts and problems we have, and to take care of those things in life and in our relationships that cause us heartache and stress

→to straighten them out....learn from them.....and move on so that the blossoms of God's love may spring forth.

i.o.w. untattoo our selves...of those things we regret having done....

→And perhaps the best way for us to accomplish this is through a true spirit of repentance and sorrow....

→repentance is a hard pill to swallow sometimes...and we are often tempted to avoid it and stay away from it...

→when we hear words like “confession and sin and repentance” often what comes to mind is .....fear...avoidance....and ignorance...

→and most of us have a fairly high degree of resistance to any of those words....either they create bad images of our worst church experiences or else we just plain out try to ignore them...and keep them out of sight and out of mind....

Yet....when you think about it.....repentance is a gift from God...that reaches into every part of our lives.....

→it is our way of announcing that we don't have to go on repeating the same tired mistakes.....

→repentance is our way of saying I want to be different.....I want to change those things in my life that I don't like about myself...I want to change those attitudes that make me act like a fool...I want to change my whole being and break away from the past.....I want to change direction in my life

→repentance is our way of making this world a bit more better and pleasant.....by taking responsibility for the words and actions and deeds in our lives and doing something about changing our direction

→**it is**..... about making straight the pathways of our lives as John urges us in today's gospel.

## PAUSE

→this Advent is our opportunity to repent for the things we have done wrong in the past months

→and to think about and realize those things that I don't like about myself

→it is no secret...that to confess our sins, to repent for our mistakes, to admit that I have done wrong can be very difficult to do at times...

admitting our faults, admitting our need for help...seeking out reconciliation.....can even be more difficult and humbling

→but that IS THE KEY to unlocking the future....and bringing us even closer to God and one another.

## PAUSE

→this season of Advent urges us to make straight our paths...to straighten out the bends and curves of our lives and realize more fully the many blessings we have been given so that we can be prepared for the coming of the Lord.

→in simple terms.....now is the time to untattoo ourselves from the wrong we've done and regretted doing....to erase it from our lives...

.....so that when the Lord comes...we might greet him with the wonders of his love.