

St Pius & St Anthony 2nd Sunday Advent Homily 2026 Year A Matt 3:1-12

Having just come through Thanksgiving week, and hearing about John the Baptist's diet, have you ever heard this at a dinner table, of somebody saying, "Maybe I shouldn't mention this while we are eating, BUT...." and they go right on and talk about what might turn one's stomach! But I think Well, hearing about John's 'insect-ful' meals, made me remember the only time close to such a meal for anyone I know of: When I was little, we camped a lot, and sometimes we would go the 'old-school' way camping only with old canvas tents. So our kitchen was basically a dedicated picnic table that we left everything on. We had good containers and coolers, but our soft drinks were lined across the table with other supplies. And I'll say one of us (three brothers) got up in the morning and to have a little coke for breakfast, one of us, poured some into a cup and began to drink it. Suddenly though, they just began spewing it out of their mouth like a fire hose! What? Full of swimming or dead ants! Somebody had not put the top on tightly and ants had swarmed in to the bottle, entering that sugar feast of coke for them. Now, this was a long time ago, before 'protein drinks' became a thing like they are now. Or was that where the brand name "**FANTA**" orange drink got its name!

But what about John's unique diet and clothing? What did that signify? Well, it all symbolized his mission of preceding the coming of the Messiah. According to the prophecy of Malachi 3:23, before the Messiah appeared, first Elijah would return to announce the Savior's coming (*the idea was that Elijah was in heaven ready and waiting to be sent down again since he never really died- Elijah had been assumed up into heaven by the fiery chariot-2Kings 2:11*). So before the Messiah came back, Elijah would be the warm-up show. And here enters John's unique dress and diet. His camel hair clothes and leather belt were Elijah's brand (2 Kings 1:8), Elijah's distinctive uniform attire (like if you saw a red cape-that's superman!). And his diet told of the simple penance that was harsh but promising of greater things – the locusts of the Egyptian plagues that led to the desert before the then sweet honey of the promised land! Jesus confirms this Identification of John with Elijah in Matthew 11:14. John is the predecessor who will announce the messiah, and John does this repeatedly as when he points Jesus out, as the Expected one to follow, calling Jesus in public, the 'Lamb of God' at least twice (John 1:29,36) before of course the actual Divine Revelation of Jesus' role when he is baptized (*with the Father's voice and Spirit's descent from heaven in Matt 3:17-21*). So John is faithful about fulfilling his role & announcing the Messiah!

Yet, what is his message to us? Repent! Turn toward God! Convert! Get ready (it's about to go down!) **God's coming.** Do what we need to, and get on

board with God, because everything is about to change and we need to, too! John says, “Straighten up God’s way!” (Matt 3:3) We need to get things in order!

We often talk about the evangelist Luke (this is Matthew we hear today) being the best writer in the New Testament. Reportedly, Luke’s Greek is the most polished, his form is classical, and he’s the most ‘history-conscious’-concerned about precision, factual time/place). But I have to say that Matthew here, gets right to it as a **good journalist** and tackles in his first couple verses of chapter 3, answering the five W’s of good communication (Comms 101) (‘who, what, when, where and why’). In his verse 1 & 2, he answers for us:

who -John the Baptist,

what -John preaches ‘repentance-conversion’ ,

when -in those days (doesn’t sound specific but scripturally it is – for example, Jeremiah uses that exact phrase 3x to announce God’s coming in 3:17–18, 5:18, 33:15–16 (also used by Joel 3:1; 2:28–32))
If we doubt this, notice a connection between Matt’s mention of the axe at the root of trees and Jereniah’s mention of “a just shoot arising” from stump on the Lord’s Coming Day in Jeremiah 33:15---Joel calls it ‘Lord’s Day’ Joel 1:15 like Revelation’s 1:10.

where -in the desert, and

what -for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!

What an opener all laid out for us from Matthew! A call to begin again! As Chris Martin of Coldplay sings, “Oh, let’s go back to the Start!”

John wants us to restart, reset, as Jesus will say later be reborn (Jn 3:3)– or be remade – so return to God. His message is of repentance, which in its root means to turn back to God, turn away from what lead us astray away from God. So, go back to the beginning – and I find Genesis (1st book of bible) references all through this reading of Matthew about John Baptist. The whole idea of water baptism calls to mind, the swirling waters of creation (Gen 1:2). Matthew’s mention in chapter 3’s first verse “In those days” echoes “In the beginning” (Gen 1:1). John describes his ministry by quoting Isaiah 40:3, “A **voice of one**, crying out.... “ Well, the word ‘ONE’ screams of the ‘original unity’- which is God’s first design for all His creation. ‘Voice’ recalls that God made everything by His vocal creation, speaking “Let there be light’ (Gen 1:3). The ‘desert’ wilderness of John is identical ‘to the primordial, chaotic wild waters of the abyss’ (Gen 1:2-‘without form or shape, with darkness over the abyss’). Genessi describes an initial waste land, that God orders and draws life from. So the desert is a blank canvas, God’s design will be drawn on. I’m suggesting here that John’s message is one of re-creation – being reborn, remade. And John’s call to action is for us to ‘produce

fruit worthy of repentance' (Matt 3:8) He calls us to show our change, through actions of repentance – take up works of mercy – to display deeds that manifest our commitment to start over and be made new in Christ ('I make all things new' Revelation 21:5). John sounds here like my old math teacher, "Show your work!" So John warns us, the time is closing in on us of God's return, and when the bell rings, what work will we have to show for our time?