

**Homily – Monday of the Fourth Week of Advent
CTSA Daily Mass – December 23, 2024**

“Prepare the Way of the Lord!” Dear brothers and sisters, as we approach the celebration of Christmas, the Church calls us to reflect on a beautiful promise from the prophet Isaiah: *“Let justice descend, you heavens, like dew from above, / like gentle rain let the clouds drop it down. / Let the earth open and salvation bud forth; / let righteousness spring up with them!”* (Is 45:8). These words, which are often prayed in Advent, express a deep longing for salvation, a cry for God to come and restore His people.

This promise is fulfilled in Christ Jesus. Through the prophet Malachi, God declares: *“I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me; And suddenly there will come to the temple”* This messenger is John the Baptist, the bridge between the Old and New Testaments. John’s mission was to announce the arrival of the Messiah, Jesus, and prepare hearts to receive Him.

John’s birth was surrounded by wonder. His parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth, experienced God’s mercy in their old age. Zechariah, though struck mute for doubting God’s promise, proclaimed with great joy at John’s birth, *“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he has visited and brought redemption to his people.”* (Lk 1:68). John’s very name means “God is gracious,” and his life was dedicated to pointing others to Christ.

Today, we are also called to be messengers like John. In this Advent season, we are invited to prepare a place for Christ in our hearts and in the world around us. How? Pope Francis gives this advice: *“contemplate a little, in silence, before the Nativity scene. In the school of Saint Francis of Assisi, we can become a little*

childlike by pausing to contemplate the scene of the Nativity, and by letting the wonder of the ‘marvelous’ way – in which God wanted to come into the world – be reborn in us.” (end of quote).

Let us offer ourselves to God, just as we are, with all our strengths and weaknesses.

The Scriptures remind us of the offerings that please God: Abel’s offering was accepted because it was given in faith (Hebrews 11:4). David’s broken and contrite heart was not despised (Psalm 51). The widow’s offering was praised by Jesus because she gave all she had (Luke 21:1-4).

What offering will you bring to Jesus this Christmas? Is it faith, humility, or generosity? Perhaps it is simply your willingness to be transformed by God’s mercy.

Do not fear bringing your brokenness to Christ. Like John the Baptist, who pointed to the Lamb of God, we too can prepare the way, for Jesus to enter our lives and the lives of others. Let us trust that God’s hand is upon us, guiding, blessing, and lifting us up in His love.

This Christmas, encouraged by the tender embrace of Our Lady of Guadalupe, may our hearts become her Son’s manger, and may we, with renewed joy, proclaim: “God is with us!”