

## Advent 3 2021

When St John was preaching it was from an understanding that found its roots in the time before Jesus. He believed in the Messiah but he had never seen or heard of the miracle of the loaves and fishes. The promise of eternal life was not something he had learned from the teaching, or example of Christ.

St John the Baptist had not seen the promise fulfilled.

Thus the witness of this strange and struggling man can be profound for those of us who find ourselves at times lost in the toil of daily life.

For those of us who at times find it difficult to see beyond the next task, and are thus weary of the challenges that life presents us with.

It is for this reason that the place of the greatest beauty and dignity exists not in the triumph of achievement, nor in the courage of taking on the challenge, but in the struggle of the everyday commitment to the faithful service of the ideal.

This runs through all ages.

The student confronted by the boredom of revision. Who sits in a room cluttered with books, and untidy cloths, and CD's, and distractions.

Who is learning not history or physics, but that if anything is of value. then it most certainly will involve struggle. The student who is confronting not just the subtlety of Shakespeare's verse, but the need to remain faithful to the challenge, before (**before**) its promise is fulfilled.

A promise which is fundamentally of love. A calling which seeks to draw the individual from mediocrity to the highest celebration of existence that those talents can achieve.

A promise which is all too often clouded in the pressures and threats of our daily life.

The parent who sits again in the car between cubs and shopping. Between arranging holiday cover for the children, and a visit from grandparents. The one who wonders where have all those years gone and yet who remains faithful to the love that was felt when that small baby was born. A baby who now is going through the confusion of adolescence and like a massive cuckoo in the nest continually cries out for more and more.

A tired parent who cannot see further than the next task.

Who is in the midst of the struggle, and as yet has not seen the promise fulfilled.

A promise which is fundamentally of love. A calling which seeks to teach the children that whatever the circumstances and the demands that they are precious and cherished as the greatest gift that life has given.

A vision, which is all too often clouded by the chaos of family life.

Then there are those engaged in the battle, which is old age.

The pensioner who worries more now about the grown up children, than when they had been totally dependant upon the care given. The effort needed to deal with the aches and pains and not to drop into that sense of despondency. The evidence that would encourage the individual to think that their role was already complete, their contribution negligible.

When weary it is difficult to realise how treasured is their part in others lives. When feeling the most vulnerable, we can be blind to the promise that our faithfulness can give.

A promise which is not dependant upon money or work, but which is stripped down to its most basic elements of kindness. A calling more subtle and more precious as a result of the great effort needed to give.

St John the Baptist never saw in his earthly ministry the promise fulfilled.

Thus he is truly wonderful.

Because the place of greatest beauty and dignity exists not in the triumph of achievement, nor in the courage of taking on the challenge, but in the struggle of the every day commitment to faithful service of the ideal.

All shall be well and all manner of things shall be well.

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HOLD ON