

December 7, 2014 Paul Revere and The Baptist

Brothers and Sisters, we can all thank Henry Wordsworth Longfellow, a Nineteenth Century American poet, for creating an unforgettable legend about one of the most revered figures of the American Revolution, Paul Revere. In his justly celebrated poem, "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere", Longfellow tells the tale of a brave patriot who, at the risk of his life, forewarned his comrades about the imminent attack of British soldiers. Alone on horseback, he rode through Concord and Lexington (Massachusetts), crying out in a loud voice "The British are coming. The British are coming" Perhaps you may recall the opening words of the poem:

"Listen, my children, and you shall hear the midnight ride of Paul Revere"

His message is a call to arms. The friends of the revolution must be ready to defend themselves for the sake of a noble cause. "Be prepared" is his message.

In this season of Advent we turn our attention to a voice crying in the wilderness. His name is John the Baptist, one of God's chosen messengers and the last of the Old Testament prophets. Commissioned by the Lord to carry out a task, his role is to prepare the people for the coming of Jesus, the long awaited Messiah. He is the first of the witnesses of Jesus. His message is clear. "Prepare the way of the Lord", he cries, "...make straight his paths" (Mk 1:3).

How does one prepare for his coming? The prophet says: Repentance and conversion. As we learn in the first chapter of Mark, there are people, who for the sake of conversion and repentance, are willing to make the journey into the wilderness to receive a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of their sins. (Mk. 1:4) They each recognize a need for a new direction in life, a straight path leading to the Lord Himself.

In view of today's gospel, let us consider the following questions. If John the Baptist were to suddenly appear in one of our major cities, how would he be received, with contempt or derision? Would he be ignored? Would he be labeled a fundamentalist, a religious fanatic, a rigid reformer out of touch with contemporary moral standards of behavior?

Do we recognize the call for conversion, a radical change in our outlook on life? Is our life governed by God's revealed word and the teachings of His Church? Do we imitate the Baptist in his humility and his extraordinary devotion to the Lord? Do we confess our sins?

"The Lord Jesus is coming! The Lord Jesus is coming!" It is the voice of the crone crying in the wilderness. It is the voice of your pastor! Yikes!

Be prepared!