

## **Donnybrook**

7 January 2022

### **Welcome**

In the coming year, the synodal pathway, laid out by the Holy Father, will be at the centre of our concerns and work. It is good, therefore, to hear the fundamental proclamation of Jesus in today's Gospel. It is in three parts.

### **Steps**

Repent. In English, repent means mostly looking back with regret. This is not a good translation. A much better translation would be convert. Convert includes the idea of looking back but takes in as well a broader vision and future direction.

Kingdom of heaven. There used to be an old jingle: God's in his heaven and all's right with the world. That is definitely not what is meant. On the lips of John the Baptist and Jesus, the kingdom of the heaven is first of all an admission that things are not all right. Instead, it is a hope that, although now unseen, God may soon act on behalf of a suffering world. At the pen of Matthew, Kingdom of Heaven points also to the death and resurrection of Jesus, when God showed his outreach in grace to fractured humanity.

Is near. On the lips of John the Baptism, this means the in-breaking of God will be soon, perhaps triggering the end of time. Initially Jesus meant the same. In Matthew's mind, this has happened already: Jesus is out Emmanuel, God-with-us, always until the end of time.

### **Conclusion**

Jesus' original proclamation is a call to faith, to hope and to conversion of heart. If we hear it as individuals and as a community, the synodal pathway will need of life giving and life changing.