

**Last week** are told to be **alert** and ready. And **this week** we are told to **prepare**. Both gospels certainly became very relevant to **me** this **past week**. I am part of what the Church calls “**Consulters**”, which the *one body* that continues to **act** and **meet** until the **new bishop** is named.

During one of these **meetings** we were discussing – **months back** – our **role** when he is named. We were instructed that when **Holy Father** announces the new bishop that we have to be there together for the **news conference**.

So, on **Monday morning**, **Msgr. Lane** asked, “Can you be at the **Pastoral Center at 9:45**...I was like, “What have **I done** for this to **happen**? And then **he says**, “For a **news conference**.” I was like, “Of course!” because I understood what that **meant**. I quickly told some of the **staff**, and, of course *my mother*. Then came another call, “**Don’t tell anyone** – a **common theme** in **Mark’s gospel**, until it was **official**.

I **could not do so** until it was **official**, but a **number** knew a **head of me**. Because at **6:00 a.m.** our time, **Tuesday morning**, it happened: **Barry Knestout (Lithuanian**, if you were wondering) an **auxiliary bishop** from **Washington D.C.**, would become our **newest bishop**. (We would **later learn** he is **one of 9 kids** and has a **twin** and on top of that, he has a **brother** named **Mark**, who is also a **priest** from **D.C.**

**Prior to this**, I decided to get there **fairly early** at the **Pastoral Center** and after **arriving**, he was named. **After this**, I would **discover** that he would be **touring** the **Cathedral facilities** at **3:30** and possibly **the rectory**. “*Be ready! Make way!*” I made a **frantic call** to warn the **staff**, but they had *already heard* and *were on it*.

The **next surprise** was that the **Consultors** and **Pastoral Center staff** would be celebrating a **noon Mass** at the **PC chapel**. I had missed that **memo!** So, I drove back to the **Cathedral** to get my **Alb** and **stole**, but also to clean the **rectory** as much as I could. Maddie, my **dog**, did not understand...

Well, when **I arrived** there was a **pressure washer** going at the **front** of Cathedral, **lawn mowers** and **leaf blowers** going on as well as **vacuuming inside**. **Students** as well as **staff** were also making way at the **CCM House** for his **arrival**. With memories of **Bishop D** and **bathrooms**, that became a **priority**.

“*Make way! He is coming!*” **Seared** my **ears**. Let me say that I was so **proud** to be surrounded by such **wonderful people** in my **staff** and **our students**. They made it **happen** by the **time** he had **arrived**.

He toured the **church**, the **museum**, our **office** and lucky couldn’t make it to the **rectory**. (He shared that **he** and his **brother** took an **evening trip** from **short pump** to the **Cathedral** as he wanted to see it, though he took it all the way from **Broad Street**. It showed me, he cared about the **Cathedral**.)

He also made **time** to meet with **20 some VCU students**, asking **each one**, *individually* for their **name**, what **year in school** and **their majors** (*chemistry* was a big winner). Then he took **questions** from them before he took **his leave**. Being from **students**, there was **no filter**, but he

handled each with **great grace**. We **finished** the **day** with **dinner** with **him** and **his brother** priests.

So, you can see where **those gospels** would be truly relevant on **such a day**. We still have much to do before his installment, but I know we will **prepare the way for him**.

In the **final words**, of the **final chapter** of the **final Old Testament**, was written by its **final prophet**, we hear this: "See, I am sending you the *prophet Elijah* before that great and dreadful day of **the Lord** comes." **The prophet** says there will be a **day of the Lord**, there will be a **day** in which **God comes in power**.

And then the **prophet falls silent**. The *prophecies end*. The **Old Testament** closes, and for **450 years** there is a famine of hearing the **word** of the **Lord**. And just when people are beginning to think, *I guess God doesn't send prophets like that anymore*.

But then, from the **silence of the desert** comes **John**, proclaiming that *someone is coming soon* who is **greater than I am**; so much **greater** that I'm not even **worthy** to stoop down like a **slave** and untie the straps of his sandals." Or as we would say, "I'm not even worthy to **park his car**."

If you watch *Entertainment Tonight*, you know that when **there's a screening of a new movie** **the stars** come out onto a **red carpet**, behind **burgundy roping**. The media packs in, all trying to see the **celebrities** dressed in **multiple-thousand-dollar gowns or multiple-thousand-dollar suits**.

Their **makeup** and **hair** are done **by professionals**, and they're **smiling** and **preening** and nodding. And there's a **flash, flash, flash, flash of cameras**. The whole **apparatus** there is **designed** so that you know who the **"it" people are, who's "it."**

**John** comes with a **counter message**. His whole message is this: "I'm **not 'it.'** Don't ever think I'm 'it.' The one who is coming after me is **'it.'** I just do the preparation work.

When the **Bishop** arrived, there were lots of **cameras**, with many **jockeying** around for his attention. And, unfortunately, some want **to be it**. But the **Bishop** understands that it can never be just about him, for his is to be a **life that points to Jesus**.

+What did Pope Francis say? The Church does not need airport bishops. It needs a bishop that will be present for his people. His role is to be the Shepherd of his flock, to make way for the Lord. I think Msgr. He is to be our model, but in away, we all have that role, don't we? That they will see Christ in us.

+I've told this story before, but it really touched in that it models the message of John the Baptist. I was the campus minister at William & Mary and we had this gal, who was a **Buddhist**, but decided that she wanted to become a Christian. And so I asked her, "Where or how did this conversion come about? Was it you had an inspiring pastor? (Kidding, I didn't say that.)

No, she said it came through her Christian friends who banged on her door every Sunday, saying, “Why don’t you come to church with us today?” And one day she did and never looked back. That is our calling, to bang on someone’s door and say, “Why don’t you come to church with us today.”

**John might say**, “I do **the preparation work**. I baptize you in the **muddy Jordan River**, but the one who is coming will baptize you into the **cool, clear presence of God himself**. He will **change you on the inside**, and you will have **new life** *flowing within you*.

It has been **over 2000 years** that we have heard from **John**. But **God** *has not been silent* as in the **days of old**. In every **generation** since that **time**, we have **countless stories** of **God coming** after those who have *prepared his way*. *It does not end with John*, because **all of us** have **a role to play in bringing Jesus**.