

Second Sunday of Advent (A)

Gospel text (Mt 3:1-12): John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: “A voice of one crying out in the desert, ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.’” John wore clothing made of camel’s hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins.

When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

“Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance”

Fr. Walter Hugo PERELLÓ
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Today, St. Matthew's Gospel presents us with John the Baptist inviting us to conversion: “the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (Mt 3,2).

Many people went to him looking to be baptized and “acknowledged their sins.” (Mt 3,6). But from the whole crowd, John focuses on some individuals in particular, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, as much in need of conversion as they were obstinate in the denial of such a necessity. It is to them that the Baptist directs the words “Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance” (Mt 3,8).

Having started Advent, a time of joyful anticipation, we find ourselves listening to John's exhortation, which wakes us to the fact that this wait is not a passive “quietism”, nor that we should think that we are already saved by the mere virtue of being Christians. This anticipation, this wait, is the dynamic searching for the mercy of God, it is the conversion of the heart, it is the search for the presence of the Lord who came, who comes and who will come again.

Advent, in reality is “conversion that crosses over from the heart into action and, consequently, to the eternal life of the Christian: (Saint John Paul II).

We should make good use of this opportune time which the Lord has given us to renovate our option for Jesus Christ, ridding ourselves of all the things that may be in our hearts and our lives that impede us from receiving Him properly. The voice of the Baptist still resounds in the desert of our times: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths” (Mt 3, 3).

Just as John was seen as “A voice of one crying out in the desert”, we Christians are invited by the Lord to be voices that proclaim to our fellow man the desire for a vigilant wait “Prepare the ways, the Savior approaches and we come out, pilgrims, to meet the Lord. Come, Lord, set us free, come to redeem your people; purify our lives and don't delay” (Hymn of Advent, The Liturgy of the Hours).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“If you have confessed at the call of Christ the bars will be broken, and every chain loosed, even the stench of the bodily corruption be grievous.” (St Ambrose)

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“John the Baptist preaches upright faith and good works so that the force of grace may penetrate, the light of the truth shine out, the paths to God be straightened. The Precursor of Jesus is like a star that heralds the rising of the Sun, of Christ.” (Benedict XVI)

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“‘Prophet of the Most High’ (Lk 1:76), St. John the Baptist surpasses all the prophets, of whom he is the last. He inaugurates the Gospel, already from his mother's womb welcomes the coming of Christ, and rejoices in being ‘the friend of the bridegroom’ (Jn 3:29), whom he points out as ‘the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world’ (Jn 1:29)...” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church N° 523)