

Sunday 2nd (A) of Advent

Gospel text (Mt 3,1-12): In the course of time John the Baptist appeared in the desert of Judea and began to proclaim his message, «Change your ways, the Kingdom of heaven is now at hand!». It was about him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said, «A voice is shouting in the desert: prepare a way for the Lord; make his paths straight». John had a leather garment around his waist and wore a cloak of camel's hair; his food was locusts and wild honey. People came to him from Jerusalem, from all Judea and from the whole Jordan valley, and they were baptized by him in the Jordan as they confessed their sins.

When he saw several Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he baptized, he said to them, «Brood of vipers! Who told you that you could escape the punishment that is to come? Let it be seen that you are serious in your conversion, and do not think: ‘We have Abraham for our father’. I tell you that God can raise children for Abraham from these stones! The axe is already laid to the roots of the trees; any tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown in the fire. I baptize you in water for a change of heart, but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than me; indeed I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire. He has the winnowing fan in his hand and He will clear out his threshing floor. He will gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn in everlasting fire».

«Let it be seen that you are serious in your conversion»

Today, St. Matthew's Gospel presents us with John the Baptist inviting us to conversion: «the Kingdom of heaven is now at hand!» (Mt 3,2)

Many people went to him looking to be baptized and «confessing their sins» (Mt 3,6). But from the whole crowd, John fixes in 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 «Let it be seen that you are serious in your conversion» (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 a way for the Lord; make his paths straight» (Mt 3, 3)

Just as John was seen as a “voice crying in the wilderness”, 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 Saviour 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).