

Second Sunday of Advent (C)

Gospel text (Lk 3:1-6): In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert. He went throughout [the] whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah: “A voice of one crying out in the desert: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

“In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea...”

Fr. Maciej SLYZ Misionero de Fidei Donum
(Bialystok, Poland)

Today, almost half of the Gospel passage consists of historical-biographical data. Not even in the liturgy of the Mass was this historical text changed by the frequent “at that time”. This introduction, so “insignificant” for contemporary man, has prevailed: “In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee (...)” (Lk 3:1). Why? To demystify! God entered the history of mankind in a very “concrete” way, as well as in the history of every man. For example, in the life of John - Zechariah's son - who was in the desert. He called him to cry out on the banks of the Jordan... (cf. Lk 3:6).

Today, God addresses his word to me as well. He does so personally—as with John the Baptist—or through his messengers. My Jordan River can be the Sunday

Eucharist, it can be Pope Francis' tweet, which reminds us that “The content of Christian testimony is not a theory, ...but better yet a person: the risen Christ, the living and only Savior of all”. God has entered the story of my life because Christ is not a theory. He is the saving practice, Charity, Mercy.

But at the same time, this same God needs our poor effort: that we fill the valleys of our distrust towards His Love; that we level the mountains and hills of our pride, which prevents us from seeing Him and receiving His help; that we straighten and smooth the crooked paths that make the path to our heart a labyrinth...

Today is the second Sunday of Advent, which has as its main objective that I may find God on the path of my life. No longer just a Newborn, but above all the Most Merciful Savior, to see the smile of God, when the whole world shall see the salvation of God (cf. Lk 3:6). That's true! St. Gregory of Nazianzus taught, “Nothing gives such pleasure to God as the conversion and salvation of men.”

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Nothing gives such pleasure to God as the conversion and salvation of men.” (St Gregory of Nazianzu)
- “The Evangelist focuses the spotlight on to John the Baptist, who was the Precursor of the Messiah, and with great precision outlines the space-time coordinates of his preaching. The Evangelist wanted to warn that the Gospel is not a legend but the account of a true story, that Jesus of Nazareth is a historical figure.” (Benedict XVI)
- ““There was a man sent from God, whose name was John’ (Jn 1:6). John was ‘filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb’ (Lk 1:15,41) by Christ himself, whom the Virgin Mary had just conceived by the Holy Spirit. Mary's visitation to Elizabeth thus became a visit from God to his people.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, N° 717)

Other comments

“All flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

Fr. Josep VALL i Mundó
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today, the Church proposes the contemplation of Isaiah's prophetic words about John the Baptist, the Precursor of our Lord, who made himself known, on the banks of the river Jordan, by announcing the salvation of God. He had the mission to “Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth” (cf. Lk 3:4-5). Now, we Christians are also requested —without any fear of the present world— to work apostolically so that “all flesh shall see the salvation of God” (cf. Lk 3:6) that only comes from God through Jesus Christ.

We have many valleys to fill, many paths to smooth, many mountains to move. Maybe these are difficult times; but if we rely upon God's Grace, we will not be lacking the necessary means. We shall be precursors insofar as we live near our Lord and, then, those words from the Diognet-letter: “What the soul is to the body, so are Christians within our world” will be accomplished. Naturally, we have to love the world we live in with all our heart, as a personage from a novel by Dostoyevsky, used to say: “Love Creation in its entirety and its elements, each leaf, each beam of light, the animals, the plants. And, while loving them, you will be given to understand the divine mystery of things. And once this is understood we shall end up loving the whole world with a universal love”.

Saint Justin said: “All nobly human things belong to us”. And from the bowels of the Earth —amidst our job, our family, and our social environment— we shall be precursors in preparing the ways of salvation that comes from God. With our example and our words, as saint Josemaría Escrivá described the Apostolic work of us, Christians, in the middle of the world, “we shall shake the complacency of those around us, we shall open wide horizons for them to face their selfish and bourgeois existence; we shall complicate their life, by making them forget about themselves while bringing them peace and joy”.

Other comments

“Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.”

Fr. Antoni CAROL i Hostench

Today, through John Baptist's voice, the Gospel urges us to prepare a way for the Lord Jesus. But, really are we the ones who have to open a path to God? Is it not me who needs help from God? In fact, we cannot do anything without Him, but, at the same time He wants to need us: “make straight his paths” (Lk 3:4). How is it possible? Because love cannot be imposed; but in all cases, love can be offered: “God, who created you without you, will not save you without you” (St. Agustin).

Jesus Christ is about to arrive on to the Earth, and we will meet Him as a little baby, "helpless", leaning over a crib: so little that He will not be able to scale the walls of pride of my heart, nor will He emerge above of the waves of my sensuality...

In the words of Benedict XVI, “the Christian faith offers us precisely the consolation that God is so big that He is able to become little”. But, I repeat, so little that, if we also don't become little, we will not see Him even as He passes by, or, even, we could in fact even be afraid of Him (as Herod was). So, we must straighten our hearts in order to “discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ” (Phil 1:10).

“Make straight his paths” This petition is not new. Many centuries ago—in prophet Baruc's times—Yahweh-God asked that to Israel. We can observe it in the first lecture of today: “For God has commanded that every lofty mountain and the age-old hills be made low, that the valleys be filled to make level ground, that Israel may advance securely in the glory of God” (Bar 5:7). The same way as the Lord made the captives of Zion to return back, if we reject the obstacles (hills of pride, valleys of warmth...), we will sing with tears in our eyes: “The LORD has done great things for us; Oh, how happy we were!” (Ps 126,3).