Christmas Weekday: January 2nd

Gospel text (*Jn* 1:19-28): This is the testimony of John. When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites [to him] to ask him, “Who are you?” he admitted and did not deny it, but admitted, “I am not the Messiah.” So they asked him, “What are you then? Are you Elijah?” And he said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” He answered, “No.” So they said to him, “Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us? What do you have to say for yourself?” He said: “I am ‘the voice of one crying out in the desert, “Make straight the way of the Lord,”’ as Isaiah the prophet said.”

Some Pharisees were also sent. They asked him, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah or Elijah or the Prophet?” John answered them, “I baptize with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie.” This happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

“Among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me”

Mons. Romà CASANOVA i Casanova Bishop of Vic
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today, in the Gospel of the Eucharist liturgy, we read the testimony of John the Baptist. The text preceding these words in St. John's Gospel is the prologue where it is clearly affirmed: “And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (Jn 1:14). What was announced in the prologue —as a great prelude— is now, step by step, manifested in the Gospel. The mystery of the Incarnated Verb is the mystery of salvation for mankind: “Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (Jn 1:17). Salvation comes through Jesus Christ, and faith is the answer to the manifestation of Christ. Whoever believes in Him is saved.

The mystery of salvation in Christ is accompanied always by the testimony. Jesus Christ himself is “The Amen, the faithful and true witness” (Rev 3:14). It is John the Baptist who bears witness with his vision and gaze as a prophet: “There is one among you whom… is coming after me” (Jn 1:26-27). And this is how the Apostles understand their mission: “God raised this Jesus; of this we are all witnesses” (Acts 2:32).

The whole Church, and therefore all its members, have the mission of bearing witness. The testimony we

bring to the world has a name. Jesus Christ is the very Gospel. He is the “Good News”. And the proclamation of the Gospel all over the world must also be understood as the key of the testimony uniting inseparably the announcement and the life. It is good to remember the words from the Pope Saint Paul VI: “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses rather than to teachers and if he does listen to teachers it is because they are witnesses”.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Come then and see new and astounding miracles: the Sun of righteousness washing in the Jordan, fire immersed in water, God sanctified by the ministry of man. Today every creature shouts in resounding song: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” (Saint Proclus of Constantinople)

- “John the Baptist “bends down” before God. It is exactly what the Redeemer does: God dwells on high, yet he stoops down to us. God’s looking down is active. It transforms me and the world.” (Benedict XVI)

- “Jesus' messianic consecration reveals his divine mission (...). ‘The one who was anointed is the Son, and he was anointed with the Spirit who is the anointing' (St. Irenaeus of Lyon). His eternal messianic consecration was revealed during the time of his earthly life at the moment of his baptism by John (...).” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 438)

Other comments

“I am ‘the voice of one crying out in the desert, “Make straight the way of the Lord’”

Fr. Joan COSTA i Bou
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today, the Gospel proposes that we contemplate John the Baptist's figure. “What are you then?” —the priests and Levites ask him. John's answer makes it clear that he is conscious of his mission: to prepare the Messiah's coming. John answers: “I am ‘the voice of one crying out in the desert, “Make straight the way of the Lord’” (Jn 1:23). To be Christ's voice, His loudspeaker, the person who announces the Savior of the world and the one who prepares His coming: this is John's mission and, just like him, the mission of all the people who know and feel themselves keepers of the treasure of our Faith.

Every divine mission has a vocation —also divine— as a foundation, which guarantees its fulfillment. Saint Paul told the Philippians: “I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil 1:6). We all, called to holiness by Christ, have to become His voice in the middle of the world. A world that often lives, with its back turned to God, lacking in love for man. It is necessary that we make Him present and make Him known with the example of our

lives and our words. Not to do it, would be to betray our vocation and mission. The Council Vatican II states: “The Christian vocation, due to its very same nature, is also a vocation for apostolate.”

The greatness of our vocation and of the mission that God has assigned us does not come from our own merit, but from the One who we all serve. Thus spoke John the Baptist: “whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie” (Jn 1:27). How God entrusts his people!

With all our hearts, we are grateful for the call to share the divine life and the mission of being His hands in our world, as well as being Christ's voice, His heart and eyes. Let's renew our sincere desire to be faithful.