

Commentary on the Gospel: The Longed-for Longs for Us

Gospel for the 2nd Sunday in Advent (Year C), and commentary.

Gospel (*Lk 3:1-6*)

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the

wilderness. He went into all the region around 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,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.

Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,

and the crooked shall be made straight,

and the rough ways made smooth;

and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

Commentary

Saint Luke's concern to offer us such exact information about Jesus' birth easily leads us to a conclusion: we are being presented with an historical event. The Word became flesh at a specific moment in a specific place, and in specific circumstances. None of this is unimportant, since our whole life depends upon what is written in the Gospel. The outcome of our personal existence depends on the fact that God has freely chosen to take part in mankind's history.

Christ is the fulfilment of all human desires. He is the desired of all nations, as the prophet Haggai says.^[1] Otherwise, we couldn't understand why throughout so many ages we find predictions and prophecies about the coming of the Messiah, and why each and every one finds its fulfillment in the Person of Jesus.

The coming of Jesus required a Precursor, John the Baptist, and the coming of the Precursor was announced by Isaiah. The fullness of time,^[2] the historical moment when Christ came to dwell among men,^[3] was such a crucial moment that God decided to prepare for it with the greatest care: not only sending someone to announce it, but also announcing the one who would come to make the announcement.

The role of John the Baptist is decisive in this time of Advent, since his arrival shows us how eagerly God has prepared his plan for us. We are destined to share in Christ's life, and therefore God has done everything possible to prepare for our personal encounter with Him. This divine care should amaze us, and the preparation for Christmas spurs us to rediscover with renewed amazement that the desired of all nations wants to dwell in our hearts.

The One who is longed for longs for us. Certainly that conviction filled the heart of the Baptist, and spurred him to carry out his prophetic role with so much ardor. To discover and open ourselves to that announcement is the beginning of salvation. Therefore Advent is an opportune time to speak with John the Baptist in our prayer, and to ask him to obtain for us the same desires he had to prepare our soul for our Lord's arrival.

But to do so, we need to welcome his message of penance. It is good to realize that Advent is a time of conversion. This doesn't mean doing great things, but perhaps offering our small daily efforts with more affection and joy to our Lord, as John would have offered the discomforts in the desert, and Joseph and Mary offered the setbacks and sufferings on the road to Bethlehem.

^[1] Cf. *Haggai* 2:7.

^[2] Cf. *Gal* 4:4.

^[3] Cf. *Jn* 1:14.

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