

Pastor's letter

December 13, 2009

Dear parishioner,

As in last Sunday's Gospel, we find again John the Baptist. Last Sunday we observed how John the Baptist received the Word of God in the silence of the desert and how he started to prophesy thereafter. This Sunday we see John immersed in his job, in a mission that was to foster hope in God to everybody, be they good and honest people, thieving publicans, or violent soldiers, no one excluded. John the Baptist has a wise and balanced answer for each person. He doesn't turn their lives upside down. He simply asks them to be more honest and transparent in their role as citizens.

It is interesting to notice how different classes of people ask the same question, "*What should we do?*" John the Baptist doesn't give them an answer that implies a total change in their lifestyles. He simply invites them to modify their style of life. To the crowds "*Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.*" To the tax collectors "*Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.*" To the soldiers "*Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.*" (Luke 3, 10-17)

To meditate on this Sunday's Gospel proves to be most challenging. John the Baptist, with his simple yet apparently ingenuous answers, goes to the depth of a problem that today, unfortunately, still continues to exist. "*What should I do? Please, give me the solution to my problems!*" It seems strange but still true. Many people spend a lot of their time looking for someone else to resolve their problems. They do not even consider the fact that in most cases the solution is not to be found outside of them, but in themselves.

Do you know what one of the most profitable businesses of an editorial is? This is the area in which some individuals sell us solutions to the problems in our daily life. With a little more or less than \$20 we can receive a book where, step by step, for about 200 to 300 pages, we learn what we must do resolve our problems. Enter any book shop and go to the psychology department and you will probably notice that the greatest part of the books on display have such titles as "*The Decalogue to be Happy*"; or "*How to Resolve the Conflict Relationship With Your Children*"; or "*The Simpler Way to Earn Money*"; or "*Does Your wife or Your Husband Betray You? Here's What You Must Do So She/He Doesn't Do It Anymore.*" Obviously these titles are the fruit of my fantasy, yet they are examples of topics to which people look for solutions. Someone gives them the solution in a book. These good and very cunning writers sell illusions; the illusion of happiness, the illusion of love, the illusion of serenity; all of this at a low cost, only a few dollars.

There are not only psychologists that resolve our problems. There are also the "magicians". With more than \$50, they can tell you if you will be successful in the next ten years. With others, \$100 allows you to talk with your grandfather that passed away ten years ago. There are also those, who for only \$30, will sell you a book of dreams,

where you can learn to decipher the meaning of your dream and know what numbers to play to win the '6/49' lotteries.

Do you know why there are so many people that sell solutions? Because there are a lot of people that ask, *"What should I do? Please, give me the solution."* The solution, as John the Baptist says, must be searched inside of ourselves. One day my spiritual father told me, *"If the problem has happened in you, the solution will be borne from you. Therefore, do not try to find it in me or expect me to resolve it for you. From where the question comes, the answer also comes."* John the Baptist, to the people that ask him, *"What should we do?"* he does not respond with a solution, but he simply says, *"Look inside of your life. There you must find what is well for you, what you need."*

We must correct our style of life. People want to resolve their own problems, but not if it takes too much work. Better to pay \$20 and have everything done for you. People say, *"I don't have time for these things! I don't have time to lose!"* But why do they complain and say, *"Why am I not happy and why am I often depressed?"* Perhaps it would be better for them to look for the answer inside of themselves, perhaps they should modify their style of life, asks the Lord to be patient with them, be happy with what they have.

Why is it that every time you talk to your children it always ends in a conflict, and almost every evening you go to sleep feeling sick to the stomach? Try looking at the problem, if it exists, from their points of view. Do not assume that there is only one-way to look at things, your way. Be humble, open your heart and mind to your children. Perhaps they are crossing a difficult period and they don't have the courage to talk about it with you because you are so taken up with your own ideas.

You may have realized that with your wife or your husband it is not the same as before and perhaps you have been betrayed. Don't wait for long, not until it is too late. Open yourself, speak in a clear way without delay, and make him or her understand that you still love her or him, just like before. Even if there are great problems it won't seem like you cannot resolve them, with the same strength of love that for ten, twenty, thirty years or more has held you together.

Maybe you are crossing a period where money is scarce and you would like to have a more secure job or financial position? Try looking around you, to those people whose economic condition is worse off than yours and be generous with them. Later you will realize that your economic situation was not so bad.

To conclude, John the Baptist, in a simple and intelligent way, invites us not to go far from ourselves. He asks each of us to learn to look deep within ourselves, in our hearts, in our minds. Only there will we find the solutions to our daily problems, only there can we prepare the road to the Lord who wants to be always part of our lives.

Peace, Father Luciano