

Pastor's letter

December 6, 2009

In this Sunday and next Sunday's Gospel, our Church presents to us a particularly interesting person, John the Baptist. Before talking about the message that the Lord offers us in this Sunday's Gospel, I would like you to notice how Luke the Evangelist introduces Saint John the Baptist with a detailed historical description. This is to say that what he is writing is not imagination, but something that really happened.

In this Gospel there are at least six or seven aspects that can be useful for personal meditation and preparation for the Holy Christmas, but from all of these I would like to focus my attention on just three aspects.

At the end of the historical introduction in the first paragraph, Saint Luke says: "The word of God came to John...", the Word of God (the Holy Spirit) entered into John and brought about a transformation in him. The Word of God produced something new. After the Baptist received the Word of God he went and preached throughout the region. It is interesting to notice in the Bible what some interventions of the Word of God are. God's Word in the beginning of history goes down on creation, and the world and every living being were born. God's Word through the angel is handed down to Mary and Jesus is born; the Word of God falls upon John and he starts to prophesy. When God enters in us, when He comes to us, He produces a new creation, a birth, a renewal. Every intervention of God is a new reality destined to upset radically every human perspective.

The Word of God creates and renews every presence already existing. When we decide to dip into the Word of God completely, we are not the same anymore. Inside of us a change happens. It allows us to discover in us things that we never saw before, something that we never imagined: this is the beginning of the spiritual life of every Saint. The difference between common people and the Saints is this. The Saints, like every other human beings, feel and experience the Word of God. The Saints trust in that Word and with strength, tenacity, and courage they go on, considering the Word of God the only purpose in their lives. Instead, for common beings like me and so many others, we recognize that God is in us but we don't allow ourselves to be totally involved in Him.

The second aspect of which I would like to speak is around the importance of the desert around us and inside of us. We read in many parts of the Bible that the desert was a very important place: the liberation from Egypt (Exodus 5, 1; 13, 17-21), the Babylonian liberation (Isaiah 40, 3); it was a necessary place for Moses (Exodus 3), for Elijah (1King 19), for Paul (Galatians 1, 17), for Jesus (Luke 4, 1-13). The desert, more than a physical place, is a dimension of life. It is necessary that we stop running away from

ourselves, stop looking for answers and solutions out of ourselves, stop filling our minds with useless ideas and thoughts and start looking within ourselves, without lying to ourselves. In the desert there is nobody. If we decide to remain there for a while, we will only find ourselves there, no one else. Many people feel terror to be alone with themselves. There is he who cannot be without doing something, he doesn't succeed in having the patience to be firm inside to himself. There is he who must speak always and to fill all the empty spaces, he cannot stay quiet and listen to himself. There is he who doesn't succeed in being alone and he always has to be together with someone because he is afraid of himself. A lot of people look for "time for themselves": they take a rest, they read a book, they practice some sports, they go out with some friends; they do what usually they don't do. Well! But "to be with ourselves" is another story.

A great exercise would be to spend a whole day long without anybody around. No books, no telephone, no things to be done, nothing to be written and just a little bit to eat. At the beginning you will find just the void around you and you will look for the way to escape. But if you have the strength to remain, you will have a great surprise... (Try it and you will understand!)

The third aspect of which I would like to speak about comes from John the Baptist: "*Prepare the way of the Lord, make His path straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low...*" (Luke 3, 6)

To succeed in living this third aspect depends on how much we are able to involve ourselves in the first two aspects: a way of living the Word of God that is inside of us and the courage to remain alone and discover ourselves.

"*Make His paths straight*" How often are our thoughts neither clean nor good! How many times are we full of anger that we want to beat someone! We should be making straight our way of thinking, then we will be free and happy.

"*Every valley shall be filled.*" During life we sometimes feel betrayed, abandoned, without anybody to turn to for help. We feel exploited, humiliated, derided. It seems as if the whole world is against us. Forget it! How is it possible to live and be happy with those "holes" inside of us? Let's fill them with the love of God.

"*Every mountain and hill shall be low.*" How many times have we been proud? We feel competitive and annoyed because our friend or neighbor has a better job and a more beautiful house and car. Why do we feel superior to others and are arrogant? Why do we judge? If we look inside of ourselves and others from so high a level, how will we succeed in seeing what there is in us to correct?

In preparation for the Holy Christmas in the silence of the desert, let's live with God in us and with his help work at straightening the tortuous paths, fill the enormous holes that life has provoked inside of us, lower our mountains of arrogance. Only this way will we succeed in seeing Jesus, who was born, died and was raised, really here, inside of us.

Peace, Father Luciano