

## *Prepare the way of the Lord*

### **II Sunday of Advent**

**Homily, 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2020**

**Mark 1,1-8**

**father G. Paparone o.p.**

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*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ (the Son of God). As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. A voice of one crying out in the desert: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.' " John (the) Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. John was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. And this is what he proclaimed: "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the holy Spirit."*

The Gospel of this second Sunday of Advent invites us to prepare for Christmas, particularly through the tale of the preparation to Jesus' coming on earth realized by John the Baptist: ***Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.***

I will linger on this verse.

God the Father sends his Son to the men to save them, but Jesus cannot do that in any way: first of all, a preparation is necessary.

But, **what does "preparation" mean?**

It means an availability to welcome the Saviour; ***to prepare the way means to recognize the need for mercy, help, forgiveness, salvation.***

In our world, the man aware of being lacking and insufficient to himself, aware of having absolute need for someone who can free him from his situation, puts himself in the correct position to welcome the Saviour.

This preparation is **above all an attitude of the soul** which derives from the awareness of being in need for help, and aware that if someone fails to save and free us, we remain prisoners of ourselves forever.

The second part of the verse tells us how this preparation can be done.

Being aware of the help that Jesus brings us is not enough; we need to prepare ourselves through a **moral conversion: *make straight his paths.***

The other evangelists will explain and better describe what this conversion is, but the prophets had already anticipated what was necessary to wait for the Messiah.

The prophet Isaiah tells us the same in the first reading today: *each valley be filled up, each path be made straight.*

In short, we are talking of a moral conversion.

My dearest ones, each one of us must look into him/herself and see what is morally wrong, i.e. what is wrong from a relational point of view. We must confront the good and the evil, what our conscience tells us and even what our society and our culture suggest us.

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It is an active attitude to moral conversion, which nevertheless is only a preparation; **Christian life doesn't end up in a moral conversion, but this is the prerequisite for an authentic encounter with God.**

This encounter with God goes far beyond because, as St. John says in this piece, *I have baptized you with water* (moral conversion) but *He will baptize you with the holy Spirit*: that means, He will give you something bigger, more powerful which doesn't belong to us or to any other man, but it comes from God only.

This is the gift from God, this is coming to the world.

All populations with their religions, their wise men, their philosophers and poets are called to moral conversion; in all the highest cultures of mankind we find this invitation to a morally correct behaviour.

To prepare, to morally convert means **to put ourselves in the position to be able to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

But there is a further preparation which implies an **existential conversion**, a deep and very difficult one; it is the appeal which is addressed by Jesus in his first preaching and by the Church after Him. We can summarize it through St. Peter's words which we can read in the second reading: *according to his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth.*

Jesus has sent John the Baptist as his messenger to prepare his path; but when He arrived, He said to look for the Kingdom of God: *the kingdom of God is close, look for the kingdom of God first and all the rest will be given you as surplus.*

This kingdom is exemplified in St. Peter's words: *we wait for new heavens and a new earth, in which justice dwells.* Hence, my dearest ones, while waiting for these events, do all you can to be found by God in peace, with no guilts and no marks.

Therefore, an authentic moral conversion, an authentic acceptance of God in our life must disclose the desire to enter a new world, different from this one; the desire to avoid compromises with this world, not to try to be reconciled with it but to feel strangers to it, as St. Peter indicates in his letters, where he invites us to live as pilgrims. Our Jerusalem is not here but in *Heaven!*

Let's start walking, let's live in view of this realization of new heavens and new earth.

Christmas is the possibility to enter this new dimension; while abandoning this world, we abandon the old man and we go forward a new kingdom, a new world, a new humanity with the aid of the Holy Spirit, which God largely gives us.

May the Lord help you who are listening and may He also help me, to live looking for the gift of the Holy Spirit to spend our life for his Kingdom.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.