

The Second Sunday of Advent presents to us the person of St. John the Baptist, who was entrusted with the mission as the precursor in the plan of salvation through the Divine Son. St. Augustine explains why the Divine Son...God would need such a messenger: "the Lord willed to announce to men His own coming through the Baptist, lest if He appeared suddenly, they would fail to recognize Him." (Office of Readings, Nativity of St. John the Baptist) The mission as the precursor was to make ready a nation fit for the Lord. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI explains what this "make ready" means. St. John the Baptist through his demanding words and sharp tone is "calling the people of Israel to repent of their sins and to correct every injustice." (Angelus, 9 December 2007) The reason that they need to repent of their sins and correct every injustice is because of the immanent judgment that is coming: "every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." The reason for the sharp tone is to wake them from their safe and comfortable lifestyle - a compliancy because they are "the Chosen people."

To carry out this mission faithfully and be effective in it required a certain disposition in life: humility. St. John the Baptist came to baptize with water for repentance but there is one more powerful who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire, he came to bear witness to the light, but knows that he is not the light himself. When questioned if he was the Messiah, he tells them plainly, that he is not the Messiah and goes further to say that he is not worthy to carry the strap of his sandals. When approached by the Son of God for baptism in the Jordan, he exclaims that it is not right that he be the one to baptize. At the same occasion, St. John the Baptist points and says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

The mission that was given to St. John the Baptist all those years ago is also entrusted to us who have been baptized. Our words and our actions...our witness is to bring people, our family and friends, to Jesus and then move aside and let Him transform them. We are to bring souls to Him and He will make of them whatever He wants or needs. Sometimes in this mission we are asked to use demanding and challenging words and we are to call out hypocrisy. In order to fulfill this mission and be effective in it, we too need to be humble.

Humility roots us in Christ who is our saviour. This is what we celebrate at Christmas, that the Son of God humbled himself, became a servant of the circumcised, so that all people might glorify God. We glorify God because through His Son and our redeemer, Our Heavenly Father has begun the restoration of all creation through his cross and resurrection. The prophet Isaiah gives us an image of what the final picture of what this restoration looks like - justice...peace...unity...harmony in all of creation and something very subtle, but profound with the child who is playing over the hole of the asp, the venomous snake...victory over sin and the effects of that original sin pride.

Humility, which roots us in Christ our Saviour, also helps us recognize that the mission has been entrusted to us by God and at the end of the day we are just instruments in the hand of Our Lord. And God has not abandoned us in this mission...its not impossible. He has given to us the sevenfold gift of the Holy Spirit...the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

In our mission, we don't have to dress like St. John the Baptist...rather we should clothe ourselves with humility. We don't have to eat locusts and wild honey...rather we receive the food

that nourishes the soul our Lord, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity... He who humbles himself so greatly in the Eucharist to be our food transforms us to do likewise in the world. May our Blessed Mother, through her Immaculate Heart, who accepted the mission given to her with humility, lead us and guide us this Advent in our mission also.