

3 Advent A 2019 SML MT 11:2-11

Human nature makes one set of plans, and either God, events or someone in authority makes another. At times, life is like the one who pushes a stone up a mountain only to have it roll down again. We live close to God, but God seems to be indifferent. Yet, in reality, we have no idea how much we are loved and remembered in that hour when we seem unloved and forgotten by Our Blessed Lord.

Consider John the Baptist, first at the River Jordan. This son of the choicest family of the chosen people became a hermit to prepare for the coming of Our Blessed Lord. A camel skin tunic, and wild locusts for food symbolized his alienation from the world, not because he became disillusioned, but rather, to become a voice. John the Baptist was the first to fix his eyes on Our Blessed Lord. Yet:

- ✓ No miracles
- ✓ No feeding the 5000
- ✓ No healing at the pool of Bethesda
- ✓ No glory of the Transfiguration

brought him to Christ.

Being young, John the Baptist was:

- ✓ uncompromising;
- ✓ black and white,
- ✓ either – or.

There was no middle ground, just instant demands, non-negotiable “nows.” As tens of thousands of pilgrims carried their paschal lambs to Jerusalem for the Passover, John saw Our Blessed Lord in the crowd, and among the lambs, he cried out, “Behold the Lamb of God!” It’s the scene muraled on the back wall of our Adoration Chapel. How John the Baptist wanted the Lamb of God to be as uncompromising as he was. In his youth, John was impatient with the chaff in the wheat, with the bad fish in the net. He wanted:

- ✓ the people of Israel cleaned out,
- ✓ those in authority purged,
- ✓ and the rich humbled.

John the Baptist was bold. He addressed Roman soldiers as if his life did not depend on their whim or will; visitors from the big city of Jerusalem got no special fare, whether they were rich or Pharisees. He was willing to make enemies. In last Sunday’s gospel, even the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to be baptized, he called “You brood of vipers!” But the Sadducees, were very “sad, you see?” Get it? 😊

With his moral principles firmly intact, John came forth, as Our Blessed Lord said, not as a reed swaying in the wind, not dressed in fine garments, but as a prophet . . . actually, he was more than a prophet! As our Blessed Lord said, there was none greater, born of a woman, than John the Baptist!

PAUSE

But the curtain dropped in this Sunday's gospel. The voice in the wilderness became a whisper when the Baptist was imprisoned in Herod's palace. Sometimes when you come face to face with those who might not agree with you, you sing a different tune. Not John. Face to face with Herod, John denounced his adultery for living with his brother's wife. (MK 6:19) Nothing excites violence in a person more than a bad conscience. One way to get rid of the halo around John the Baptist's head was to get rid his head! That would come later.

But what about John in prison? Why has the Christ whom John announced, left him in prison? Why hasn't He who opened the eyes of the blind not opened the door of his prison cell? That awful blank between John's expectations of Our Blessed Lord, and what Our Blessed Lord did not do, frightened him so much he doubted. He sent word to Jesus. Ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for

another?” (LK 17:19-20) We have no idea how much we are loved and remembered in that hour when we seem unloved and forgotten by Our Blessed Lord.

And Jesus answered the deputation. “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind recover their sight, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, the poor are hearing the good news. And happy is the man who does not find in me a stumbling block.” 7:22-23

In other words, “John, it is because I do not act as you would expect that proves that I am He. Your method is drastic and uncompromising. You expect me to act now the way I will act on judgment day when I WILL sift the chaff from the wheat and the bad fish from the net. But right now, in the wheat, I see human chaff that can be salvaged, I see bad fish that can be converted. Bring me:

- ✓ the Mary Magdalenes,
- ✓ the rich young men
- ✓ and the Zacchaeuses

and I will convert them.

I require faith, not when money is in the bank, but when there is a zero balance; not when the sun is shining, but when it is hidden.

John the Baptist was not an isolated case. In the Old Testament, the boy Joseph was thrown in the well, Moses never made it to the Promised Land, and in the New Testament, John was beheaded and never saw the light of day again.

After Our Blessed Lord sent the delegation back to John the Baptist with His answer, Our Blessed Lord then said about John, to those who were still with him,

What did you go out to the desert to see, a reed swayed by the wind? . . . Someone dressed in fine garments? A prophet? Yes, and more than a prophet . . . I tell you, among those born of women, there is no one greater than John. LK 7:24-30

John the Baptist never heard these words of Our Blessed Lord praising him for being:

- ✓ a man of conviction,
- ✓ a prophet,
- ✓ not a flimsy reed that sways with society,

for they were spoken after the messengers left John. The moment we condemn the Lord for forgetting us is the time when the Lord most highly praises us.

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by Our Blessed Lord.