

## 3rd Sunday of Advent

A man named John was sent from God.  
He came for testimony, to testify to the light,  
so that all might believe through him.  
He was not the light,  
but came to testify to the light.

And this is the testimony of John.  
When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests  
and Levites to him  
to ask him, "Who are you?"  
He admitted and did not deny it,  
but admitted, "I am not the Christ."  
So they asked him,  
"What are you then? Are you Elijah?"  
And he said, "I am not."  
"Are you the Prophet?"  
He answered, "No."  
So they said to him,  
"Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us?  
What do you have to say for yourself?"  
He said:  
"I am the voice of one crying out in the desert,  
'make straight the way of the Lord,'"  
as Isaiah the prophet said."  
Some Pharisees were also sent.  
They asked him,  
"Why then do you baptize  
if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?"  
John answered them,  
"I baptize with water;  
but there is one among you whom you do not recognize,  
the one who is coming after me,  
whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie."  
This happened in Bethany across the Jordan,  
where John was baptizing.

*Jn 1:6-8, 19-28*

Has it always been like this? Has it always been that you cannot trust the word of men? People lie, misrepresent and distort reality even when they really don't know what they are talking about. Sometimes they do it without knowing they are doing it. People use great ideas just to self-promote; they profess noble causes just to acquire money or power. Even if they happen to proclaim something that sounds like great wisdom, they often end up simply showcasing their own ego. We know they might be lying, and that's why we are cautious.

John the Baptist is surprising. He is not selling anything, he is not advertising anything, he is not trying to win any elections. In his conversation with the priests and the Levites, he is going out of his way to turn their attention away from himself. "I am the voice," he says, quoting an ancient prophet.

That quote from the book of Isaiah is the key to understanding John. He truly is the voice. He allowed his whole life to disappear, or rather, to become an instrument to give a physical vibration to the eternal divine call. "Make straight the way of the Lord."

This is the moment when a miracle happens. The highly unreliable tool of human speech becomes an instrument that provides sound to the words of God. The eternal thought, the divine wisdom, comes so close to us that it starts sounding through human speech. The words unknown to us, the words that confer God's love and mercy, start resounding in the human world.

If you listen carefully to the dialogue between the Jews and Saint John the Baptist, as remembered by Saint John the Evangelist, you will see that at the end of the conversation, John the Baptist doesn't force his audience to take any position. "He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light."

He is not persuading, convincing, or demonstrating anything. John disappears, just like a finished sentence. His audience, both the Jewish delegates from the city, as well as you and I, realize that we are no longer talking to the Baptizer. I am left standing before the One he is announcing: I can not see him yet, but I hear in my ears John's description of God's majesty and glory; I hear that the Messiah is coming to baptize with a powerful baptism; and I realize that I have to stretch myself beyond what I have known so far.

Here in this very moment, the human voice is not any more a transaction of ideas or only human emotional connection. The word spoken by man expresses God's call and the only way in which I can answer this call is my faith.

The amazing process of incarnation has begun. The amazing miracle of God becoming man, so that man can be saved, has started. The light of Christmas, the light of the presence of God on earth, starts shining in your heart and in mine when we believe in the message of the Baptizer.