

Homily for 3rd Week of Advent

12/13/20

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(Gospel – John 1:6-8, 19-28)

St. Augustine, Doctor of the Church, brings to our attention one very important truths concerning the Mission both of Christ and John the Baptist. In his homily St. Augustine places clearly the destination of the Mission of Christ and John the Baptist.

“John is the voice, but the Lord is the Word who was in the beginning. John is the voice that lasts for a time; from the beginning Christ is the Word who lives forever. Take away the word, the meaning, and what is the voice? Where there is no understanding, there is only a meaningless sound. The voice without the word strikes the ear but does not build up the heart.”

I believe in this Advent season it is so important to bring to our attention that our voices, similar to that of John Baptist, last only for a time. Only Christ – the Word of the Father – lasts forever. John the Baptist’s voice wouldn’t build up the heart, but only would strike the ears of his listeners (and would be completely meaningless sound, as says St. Augustine), if Christ were not at the center of the Baptist’s mission. Henceforth, the question each one of us must place is this: who is standing at the center of our mission? That’s why St. Augustine rightly asks: *“When the word has been conveyed to you, does not the sound seem to say: The word ought to grow, and I should diminish?”* Indeed, the celebration of *Gaudete Sunday* becomes an opportunity for us to remember that all the created reality exists only for a moment. *“Do you need proof”* – writes St. Augustine – *“that the voice passes*

away but the divine Word remains? Where is John's baptism today? It served its purpose, and it went away. Now it is Christ's baptism that we celebrate. It is in Christ that we all believe; we hope for salvation in him. This is the message the voice cried out." And this is the message the voice in our time is called to proclaim in the wilderness of this world, in the wilderness of the world thirsting for the due of God's grace: *'He has to grow, and I have to diminish'*; to speak out and to proclaim His word in order to lead Him into the hearts of those who live far away from Him in the wilderness of today's world.

This message of St. Augustine is a challenge for each one of us because it calls to prepare the way for the coming of our Redeemer. But what does it mean to prepare the way for Him in our days? In fact, John Baptist lived 2000 years ago. We in our time are unable to meet either John Baptist, or Christ... *"Don't worry if you are unable to see Christ"*, says St. Augustine, *"To prepare the way to Him means to pray well; it means thinking humbly of oneself. We should take our lesson from John the Baptist. He is thought to be the Christ; he declares he is not what they think. He does not take advantage of their mistake to further his own glory. If he had said, "I am the Christ," you can imagine how readily he would have been believed, since they believed he was the Christ even before he spoke. But he did not say it; he acknowledged what he was. He pointed out clearly who he was; he humbled himself."*

This message of St. Augustine helps us to understand that our voice wouldn't build up the heart, but only would strike the ears of his listeners, if Christ were not at the center of our mission here on earth. Our voice wouldn't build up the heart, but only would strike the ears of his listeners, if Christ were not at the center of our family and our own hearts.

In this holy Mass let us ask for the grace that Christ may always be at the center of our mission here on earth remembering that He has to grow in our hearts, and we have to diminish.