



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

*Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 9 December 2018*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Last Sunday, the liturgy invited us to experience the Season of Advent and of anticipation of the Lord with an attitude of vigilance and also of prayer: “*be mindful*” and “*pray*”. Today, the Second Sunday of Advent, we are shown *how to give substance to this anticipation*: by undertaking a *journey of conversion*, how to make this anticipation concrete. As a guide on this journey, the Gospel presents the figure of John the Baptist who “went into all the region about the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Lk 3:3). To describe the Baptist’s mission, the Evangelist Luke refers to the ancient prophecy of Isaiah which says: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be brought low” (vv. 4-5).

To prepare the way of the Lord’s coming, it is necessary to take note of the requirements of conversion to which the Baptist invites us. What are these requirements for conversion? First of all we are called to fill the ‘valleys’ caused by coldness and indifference, opening ourselves to others with the same sentiments as Jesus, that is, with affection and fraternal attention which takes on the needs of our neighbours. To fill the valleys caused by coldness. One cannot have a relationship of love, charity and fraternity with one’s neighbours if there are ‘gaps’ just as one cannot travel a road with many potholes. This requires a change of attitude. And all this should also be done with special attention to the neediest. Then there is the need to curtail the indifference caused by pride and arrogance. How many people, perhaps without realizing it, are proud, are indifferent, lack that kindly relationship. It is necessary to overcome this by making

concrete gestures of reconciliation with our brothers and sisters, asking for forgiveness for our faults. It is not easy to reconcile with another. One always thinks: “who will take the first step?”. The Lord helps us in this if we are of good will. Indeed, conversion is complete if it leads us to humbly recognize our errors, our infidelity and failings.

The believer is someone who, by being close to his brothers and sisters, like John the Baptist, opens pathways in the desert, that is, he indicates perspectives of hope, even in those existential contexts that are arduous, marked by failure and defeat. We cannot give up in the face of negative situations of closure and rejection: we must not allow ourselves to succumb to the mentality of the world, because the centre of our life is Jesus and his word of light, love and solace. It is He! The Baptist invited the people of his time to conversion, with force, with vigour and with firmness. Nevertheless, he knew how to listen, he knew how to perform gestures of tenderness, gestures of forgiveness toward the multitude of men and women who went to him to confess their sins and to be baptized with the baptism of repentance.

The witness of John the Baptist helps us to go forward in our witness of life. The purity of his proclamation, his courage in proclaiming the truth were able to reawaken the expectation and hope in the Messiah that had long been dormant. Today too, Jesus’ disciples are called to be his humble but courageous witnesses in order to rekindle hope, to make it understood that, despite everything, the Kingdom of God continues to be built day by day with the power of the Holy Spirit. Let each of us ask ourselves: how can I change something in my attitude, in order to prepare the way of the Lord?

May the Virgin Mary help us prepare the way of the Lord day by day, beginning with ourselves; and to scatter around us with steadfast patience, seeds of peace, justice and fraternity.

After reciting the Angelus, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, I warmly greet you all, pilgrims from Rome, Italy and from various parts of the world. I greet in particular the many young people from the Diocese of Orvieto-Todi. Thank you and have a good Advent journey! I greet the faithful from Trapani, Caltagirone and Bronte and the confirmands from Almè, Bergamo. I wish everyone a Happy Sunday. And please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci!*