

SCC REFLECTION: 3rd Sunday Advent Year C. Lk 3: Fr Donal McIlraith

Sunday Text : Lk 3:10-18.

[10] And the multitudes asked him, "What then shall we do?"

[11] And he answered them, "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise."

[12] Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"

[13] And he said to them, "Collect no more than is appointed you."

[14] Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."

[15] As the people were in expectation, and all men questioned in their hearts concerning John, whether perhaps he was the Christ,

[16] John answered them all, "I baptize you with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

[17] His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

[18] So, with many other exhortations, he preached good news to the people.

Reflection:

1. John was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (Lk 1:15), ever since the Visitation by Mary with Jesus in her womb (Lk 1:41ff). He has led a life of prayer and, as we heard last week the word of the Lord came to him in the desert. Everyone sees him as a prophet and is convinced of his goodness and holiness. This is why people flock to him and beg him for advice, "What shall we do?" John gives solid advice to everyone while at the same time laying bare their faults and calling them to a profound renewal.
2. To everyone he says "Share." St Basil the Great comments on this: "The bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry; The coat unused in your closet belongs to the one who needs it. We are hereby taught that everything we have, over and above what is necessary for our daily support, we are bound to give to him who has nothing' (CCC2556). We give because God has given to us, The Romans demanded so much in tax, but the tax collectors collected more that was required and lined their own pockets with it. Zacchaeus tell us this in Lk 19:8. Be honest, John says. He advises the soldiers too to live good lives. We learn here that every occupation is a good one and to be dedicated to God.
3. People admire John, his way of life and his piety so much they ask whether he might be the Messiah. This is the point at which John introduces Jesus, the Messiah who is still to come. No, the Messiah will be so much greater than John that he is not worthy to tie his shoelaces. The Messiah will be stronger, and he will baptize us with the Holy Spirit, God's fire and cleanse us thoroughly. This happened at Pentecost and it happens for us at Baptism when Jesus begins to baptize us in the Holy Spirit, something we need to have continued in our lives every day.