

## **Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Dec 5th 2010**

### **The unknown always causes us concern and uncertainty.**

While we wait we spend plenty of time imagining how it will be what we expect. We do this according to what we already know based on past experiences. If we speak of an exam we are going to do, we recall the tests we had in our youth. If we speak of a coming terrible storm, we think of the good or bad experiences we've had before with other storms. And so on. We cannot imagine something totally new.

Before the coming of Jesus, before the announcement of the Messiah, we operate in a similar way. If God comes, and Advent is nothing else but the celebration of God's coming to our life, God will appear as we have been told. Here we do not have our own experiences but what we were taught by our catechist or our parents or grandparents, what we heard when we were very small.

?????For a moment we should be able to completely empty our minds and open ourselves to the absolute novelty of God. Because God is totally different from anything imaginable. Would anyone have imagined a God who became man, incarnated in a child born in a cave?

### **Prepare the way of the Lord**

The problem is that John the Baptist before the imminent arrival of the Messiah tells us how the Messiah will be according to the prejudices and preconceived ideas. He speaks of the Messiah who is to come as more of a threat than a consolation. His arrival is more of a danger than an opportunity for salvation. The punishment is imminent for those who do not change their lives. The call to conversion is good but it is not proper to use God as a threat. For John the Messiah comes ready to burn the straw, to cut down the trees that bear no fruit. John the Baptist threatens with his words so that no illusions. What is coming is terrible and no one is prepared.

His intention was good: to prepare the way for the Lord. But in celebrating Advent we should see the reality in perspective. We have to prepare the way of the Lord but we have already received his visit. Now we celebrate again, as we have done many times in our lives. We know we have to convert but not because God threatens us with punishment but because of his grace, love, salvation, forgiveness and mercy for us.

### **The Word, the source of hope**

This Advent is a good opportunity to reread the Scriptures, the Bible. As Paul says in the second reading, it was written for our consolation and instruction, to keep alive our hope. Because in them we have the living testimony of what God is for us. We do not have to imagine. We can put aside all prejudices. In Scripture we have the living testimony of God's presence among us. Jesus speaks to the heart and he is the son of God incarnate. His word is the same Word of God. While reading the Word we feel that warms our heart, that our hope is strengthened. We feel that God works in us the conversion, not as fruit of a threat but as a result of experiencing the love of God who reconciles us inside; because the God who comes in Jesus is love and nothing but love.

Perhaps this experience of God made that the author of the book of Isaiah would write the text being read on Sunday in the liturgy. The hope of the coming Messiah made the prophet to see a new world marked by justice, loyalty and absence of all forms of violence. It's almost a dream, an impossible Utopia: the lion and the calf shall feed together; the wolf shall dwell with the lamb. "Impossible!" someone would say. But for any person who has been guided by the Word and experienced the love of God knows that it is possible and that is worth to start working for this new possible world. This is the world that God wants for us and God brings us with his Son.

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