



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 4 December 2022

[[Multimedia](#)]

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno*, happy Sunday!

Today, the Second Sunday of Advent, the Gospel for the Liturgy presents the figure of John the Baptist. The text says that John “wore a garment of camel’s hair”, that “his food was locusts and wild honey” (*Mt* 3:4), and that he invited everyone to conversion: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”! (v. 2). He preached the nearness of the Kingdom. In short, he was an austere and radical man, who at first sight might appear somewhat harsh and could instil a certain fear. But then again, we can ask ourselves why does the Church propose him each year as our primary travelling companion during this Season of Advent? What is hidden behind his severity, behind his apparent harshness? What is John’s secret? What is the message the Church gives us today with John?

In reality, the Baptist, more than being a harsh man, was a man who was *allergic to duplicity*. Listen well to this: allergic to duplicity. For example, when the Pharisees and Sadducees, who were known for their hypocrisy, approached him, his “allergic reaction” was very strong! In fact, some of them probably went to him out of curiosity or opportunism because John had become quite popular. These Pharisees and Sadducees were content with themselves and, faced with the Baptist’s sharp appeal, they justified themselves by saying: “We have Abraham as our father” (v. 9). Thus, due to duplicity and presumption, they did not welcome the moment of grace, the opportunity to begin a new life. They were closed in the presumption of being right. So, John says to them: “Bear fruit that befits repentance!” (v. 8). This is a cry of love, like the cry of a father who

sees his son ruining himself and tells him: “Don’t throw your life away”! In essence, dear brothers and sisters, hypocrisy is the greatest danger because it can ruin even the most sacred realities. Hypocrisy is a serious danger. This is why the Baptist — as Jesus would be later — was harsh with hypocrites. We can read, for example, chapter 23 of Matthew, in which Jesus speaks so strongly to the hypocrites of that time. And why do the Baptist and Jesus do this? To shake them up. Instead, those who felt they were sinners “went out to him [John], and they were baptized by him, confessing their sins” (cf. v. 5). Therefore, prowess is not important to welcome God, but rather humility. This is the path to welcome God. Not prowess: “We are strong, We are great people...”! No. Humility. “I am a sinner”. But not in an abstract way, no — “because of this and this and this”. Each of us has to confess our own sins, our own failings, our own hypocrisy, firstly to ourselves. We have to get off the pedestal and immerse ourselves in the water of repentance.

Dear brothers and sisters, with his “allergic reactions” John makes us reflect. Are we not at times a bit like those Pharisees? Perhaps we look at others from top to bottom, thinking that we are better than them, that we have our lives under control, that we do not need God or the Church, or our brothers or sisters, every day. We forget that it is legitimate to look down on someone else only in one case: when it is necessary to help them get up. This is the only case. The others are not legitimate. Advent is a time of grace to take off our masks — each one of us has them — and line up with those who are humble, to be liberated from the presumption of believing we are self-sufficient, to go to confess our sins, the hidden ones, and to welcome God’s pardon, to ask forgiveness from those we offended. This is how to begin a new life. There is only one way, the way of humility — to purify ourselves from the sense of superiority, from formalism and hypocrisy, to see others as our brothers and sisters, sinners like ourselves, and to see Jesus as the Saviour who comes for us, not for others, for us, just as we are, with our poverty, misery and failings, above all with our need to be raised up, forgiven and saved.

And let us remember another thing: with Jesus, there is always the possibility of beginning again. It is never too late. There is always the possibility to begin again. Take courage. He is close to us and this is a time of conversion. Each of us can think: “I have this situation inside, this problem that I am ashamed of...”. But Jesus is beside you. Begin again. There is always the possibility of taking a step forward. He is waiting for us and never grows tired of us. He never tires! And we are annoying, but he never grows tired! Let us listen to John the Baptist’s appeal to return to God. And let us not let this Advent go by like days on the calendar because this is a time of grace, a grace for us too, here and now! May Mary, the humble servant of the Lord, help us to meet him, and our brothers and sisters on the way of humility, which is the only one that will help us go ahead.

After the Marian prayer the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, I affectionately greet all of you, those from Italy and from various

countries: families, parishes, associations and individuals. I even see flags — Spanish, Polish, Argentinian — many. Welcome to everyone. In particular, I greet the Spanish pilgrims from Madrid, Salamanca, Bolaños de Calatrava and La Solana. In greeting those from Poland, I want to thank those who are supporting the Day of Prayer and the collection of funds for the Church in Eastern Europe.

I am pleased to welcome Catholic Action from Aversa, along with Bishop Spinillo, as well as members of the faithful from Palermo, Sutrio and Saronno; the Confirmation candidates from Pattada, Diocese of Ozieri; and those from Sant'Enrico parish in Rome.

I wish everyone a happy Sunday and a good continuation of the Advent journey. This Thursday, we will celebrate the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. Let us entrust our prayers for peace to her [the Immaculate], especially for the martyred people of Ukraine.

Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci!*