**12 DECEMBER – III SUNDAY OF ADVENT [C]**

**"I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."**

**Conversion begins with the works of mercy. One shares what one has with whom does not have. "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise." It is a not burdensome work. Do you have anything? Share it. Do you have any leftovers? Give it in almsgiving. The convert does not live only for himself, but also for his brothers who are in need. A heart that does not share is not converted. A converted heart shares. If a heart is not turned on the others, one might never speak of conversion. When a heart is not turned on the brothers, it will never be turned on his God, his Lord. It will never be turned on the Law, on the divine Statutes. Only the hearts always turned on the brothers and a heart turned on God. On God and on the brothers are one only thing.**

**Even tax collectors come to be baptized. They, too, say to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" Can one be tax collectors and baptized together? Tax collectors and converts? Tax collectors and children of Abraham? Can one exercise any ministry in history and be true children of Abraham? This is a question that deserves a reply. The son of Abraham must always know which ministry he can carry out and which he might never carry out, as it is unrighteous. One immediately replies that the son of Abraham might never do one thing in contrast with the Commandments of the Law of the Lord. The Commandments are from the first to the tenth. The obedience to the Commandments always obliges.**

**Here is what John replies to the tax collectors on behalf of Rome: "Stop collecting more than what is prescribed." It is not up to the tax collector to evaluate if the tax is fair or unfair. This is not his ministry. The tax collector must adhere strictly to what has been set to him. If it is a coin, it will have to be a coin. If two coins, two coins. If he adds to the tax, he sins against the Lord. He cannot be son of Abraham. There is the responsibility before God of whom sets the taxes and there is the responsibility of whom must require them. The one who sets the taxes must know that tomorrow he will have to give account to God even of one only cent imposed unjustly. Instead, the one who must require taxes must be very careful not to let himself be corrupted, not to add other taxation other than the one imposed. In the tax field, the sins against justice are numberless. The rigour of justice is never too much. Especially nowadays in which one plays with money in an unfair way. The Seventh Commandment is valid for everyone and tomorrow we will have to give account of each of its violation, little or great. One cannot be unfair for promise and iniquity in the violation of the Law of justice never becomes justice. Justice does not arise from promises. It arises from the obedience to the Law of the Lord that is eternal Law.**

**Can one be soldiers and children of Abraham? Soldiers also asked him, "And what is it that we should do?" He told them, "Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages." The soldier can be, he too, son of Abraham if he observes three conditions: he must not mistreat anyone; he must not practice extortion to anyone; he must be satisfied with his wage. Why must he be satisfied with his wage? Because if he is not satisfied, either he is led to practice extortion, mistreat, rob, making each of his robbery look like a loot, or forces those who are above him to increase taxes, depriving many others of the necessary. This is a truth that must never be forgotten. The body is one, even if it is made up of many parts. If a part of the body wants more or takes more, the other one will suffer an injustice. It is urgent to pay careful attention not to become unjust. The virtue of sobriety helps.**

**Let us read the text of Lk 3,10-18**

**And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" He said to them in reply, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He answered them, "Stop collecting more than what is prescribed." Soldiers also asked him, "And what is it that we should do?" He told them, "Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages." Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Messiah. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.**

**Here is the reply given by John to those who in their hearts thought, asking in their hearts whether John might be the Messiah. He baptises with water. His is the baptism of conversion for the sins of the world. Nothing more. “But one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals.” Before the Messiah, John declares of not being worthy to be his servant, so great He is. He is stronger, as He is the Strong of God. This is a difference of essence. This difference involves that in the mission, too.  “He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire.” There is a difference between immersing a person in the water and immersing him in the fire and in the Holy Spirit. The difference is substantial in the work and in the fruits. Whoever enters in the Jordan leaves with his earlier nature. Whoever enters the Holy Spirit and in the fire leaves with another nature. He leaves with the nature of Holy Spirit and with the nature of fire. This truth must be remembered to all those Christians that today teach that baptized and non-baptized are the same thing. Whether they try to go through a burning furnace or to immerse themselves in a blast furnace, they would understand the difference.**

**Here is again the difference between John the Baptist and the Messiah. John has come to preach the conversion in view of the return of the people to his Lord. The Messiah of God comes to make the judgement. What judgement is it? On earth, the judgement is a neat cut between truth and falsity, between faith and non-faith, between salvation and non salvation. Whoever believes in Him is saved. Whoever does not believe in Him is already condemned as he did not believe in the Only Begotten Son of the Father. Then, eternity comes. In eternity He holds the shovel in his hand to clean his threshing floor and to gather the wheat in his barn. But he will burn the straw with an unquenchable fire. Time is for conversion. Eternity is for judgement. Judgement is eternal. It will be of blessing or of curse, of salvation or of perdition, of paradise or hell. This truth is essence of the Gospel. One deprives the Gospel of this truth. The Gospel is no longer Gospel. Time is given to man so that he converts and bears worthy fruits of eternal life. Passed time, there is no space for conversion. Judgement occurs. Whoever is wheat enters the paradise. Whoever is straw will be burnt for eternity.**

**The mission of John is that of preparing the hearts so that they accept the Messiah already present among people, even if he has not revealed himself yet. Since every heart has his way of conversion, John showed the way to each heart. Here is why it is said “Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.” Every heart needs his word. The Holy Spirit knows every heart and He has his Word, his voice, his modalities for each heart. Whoever wants to speak to hearts must be filled with Holy Spirit. Every heart needs his Word. If we give everyone the same word it is sign that we are not in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit knows every heart, every voice. May the Mother of God come to our rescue. May She teach us how one lives of most pure faith in Christ and in his Word, especially in these days haunted by an army of false prophets.**