

## Homily for Second Sunday of Advent

Fr. Valentin Iurochkin

December 6, 2020

Today's Gospel presents to us the figure of John the Baptist preaching in the desert calling the chosen people to repentance. The mission of John Baptist was to point out the Lamb of God.

In the beginning of his mission before Jesus's baptism John the Baptist himself pointed out saying: "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the World*". Why then does John the Baptist say at the end of his mission: "'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to expect someone else?'" We know that at the time of Jesus' baptism when the sign occurred, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus... from that moment on John was certain that Jesus was the Messiah. He believed the words spoken to him concerning the Messiah. Yet, at the end of his mission we do contemplate Baptist's hesitation. Where did this hesitation come from? Why did he ask, "*Are you the one who is to come, or are we to expect someone else?*" So what kind of Lamb was John waiting for? Whom did he expect? Whom do we expect?

As we well know John went to preach repentance in view of the coming of the Messiah. Christ himself came to listen to John Baptist. He stepped into the crowd of sinners on the river of Jordan. Not that Christ was standing in need of repentance. He did it rather in order to sanctify us and set up before the example of His humility. The last will be the first. St. Gregory the Great helps to understand us deeper the meaning of the question placed by John the Baptist saying: "*This question may be answered in a better way if we attend to the order of time. At the waters of Jordan John had affirmed that this was the Redeemer of the world: after he was thrown into prison, he enquired if this was He that*

*should come – not that he doubted that this was the Redeemer of the World, but he asks, that he may know whether He who is in His own person had come into the world below, would in His own person descend also to the world below”*. John, similar to Peter, couldn't understand that Christ willed to undergo contradiction of the Cross. As Christ humbly stood in the crowd of sinners listening to the words of John Baptist, in the same way John was meant to listen to the words of preaching of the Lamb of God in the world below after Christ's descend into Hell. So, our Lord Jesus was meant to rise above all the great prophets of all the time by preaching on the Lamb of the Just. But the only way to that greatness was His humiliation. St. Ambrose of Milan as well gives us a very interesting insight in understanding of John's question. In his writings we find out that the doubt of John the Baptist does not consist in the lack of faith; for he believes, as we do, that Jesus is the Messiah. The Baptist's doubt rather consists in the lack of love. The lack of love did let John and Peter see the true meaning of Christ's mission; and sometimes the lack of love does not let us see the true mission of Christ, too. St. Ambrose states: “... *It was a great thing that John Baptist should be so far a prophet, as to acknowledge Christ, and to preach remission of sins; but like the pious prophet, he could not think that He whom he had believed to be He that should come, was to suffer death: he doubted therefore though not in faith, yet in love: So Peter also doubted, saying 'Heaven preserve you, Lord,' he said, 'this must not happen to you.'*” It was contradiction of the Cross that let to some of the Christ's followers say: “This is a hard saying; who can hear it?” Could John the Baptist, could Peter... can I?

In this Advent season the question placed by John the Baptist moves as well to ask ourselves: What are own expectations of the kingship of Christ in this world? Whom did we expect to find in the wilderness? It wasn't a man speaking wisely and dressed in a finest clothes... that was

a man teaching us that the true greatness lies in humiliation, and true love is needed in order to face the contradiction of the Cross.

May that Advent season help us to grow in love towards our Savior Jesus Christ.