

Saint Luke was a well educated man. This story of the gospel, we have just heard, sounds really solemnly. A historian writes in a solemn style about the geographical and other circumstances of Jesus' days and life.

The evangelist seemingly speaks from the angle of an ancient Google Earth program, slowly moving our focus from the distance to the concrete place and time, demonstrating everything step by step. The events take place in the great Roman Empire, in the reign of emperor Tiberius. Then also Pontius Pilatus is named as the proconsul of the province of Judea. Finally the Jewish prelates of that year Annas and Kaifas are mentioned. And then our focus changes: in the desert next to the river Jordan the messenger of the Lord appears talking about something extraordinary coming. It is strange to realise, that not in the centre of the contemporary world, not in Rome, not in Jerusalem, not in the religious centre of the Jews, but in the silence of the desert where God's eternal message sounds up.

John – who's name comes from Johanan, which means God is merciful – is ready to integrate and translate into deeds the words of God's merciful message. He declares the importance of repentance and conversion and prepares the path to the meeting of the Lord coming and his people.

In our first reading we have heard the words of prophet Baruk. The chosen nation once had been taken from the land of their captivity, from the Land of Babilon to Palestine. There the chosen nation might have experienced that the Lord „smoothed the mountains and filled up the valleys“. And – although it sounds incredible – even forests had shaded in the desert, so that the chosen people might have come home safely to Jerusalem. The prophet talking about God's gentle providence encouraged his contemporaries to be brave enough to take the road!

Some centuries later it is John the Baptist who cannot be silent any more. He did not simply shouted in the desert, did not simply offered himself, but he prepared the way of the Lord. He wanted to form himself as well as other people, to be receptive to the Word of God. We confess that Christ is the Word of God, the Logos, God's spoken word. John is the Voice in the desert who prepares the way for Christ. The voice reaches the ear, the word reaches the heart. The Logos had existed always, the man who welcomed the Logos got power and authority to declare Him to other people, too. All of us might become John, who by the testimony of our lives welcome and declare the Logos conceived in us.

From the solemnity of the testimony it clearly seems the conviction of the evangelist and the ancient Church: great and unsurpassable thing happened in the history of

mankind when John the Baptist pointed to Jesus: he is the Son of God who became man to save us.

It is astonishing to see that

1, Tiberius did not take care of the Province of Judea,

2, Pontius Pilate did not understand the split appearing in the daily routine of a subservient society because of Jesus.

3, the chief priests and the scribes did not welcome at all Jesus who they thought of as a simple wandering prophet.

This tension penetrates even the world today, but sometimes even in us, too.

A single candle lit in a dark room might be a navigation point. If there are some more candles we might even read a little by the light. But the image of the candle we might know well, is only a simple symbol of God's real light. He is the absolute and dateless light. How is it possible to welcome Him then?

The fundamental law of optics says that in homogeneous medium the light always extends in a straight line. The way of all obstacles should be removed from its way in order to illuminate us as well as our environment. So that we could welcome Christ we also have to clear his path in ourselves.

It is important to clear away the mountains of our vanity and pride. Why? Because everything that is useless and worthless in us, hinders our progression, delays our meeting with Christ.

Let's fill up the valleys of our laziness and weaknesses. Why? Because they keep us away from Christ, the shining face of God, who is coming towards us.

We cannot welcome the light of Christ either in the labyrinth in an unsettled lifestyle, because it could easily disappear.

Indeed, the path is narrow, but not impassable! Since the apostolic times, for 2000 years, many have walked on this bumpy road, where all steps leading us forward have to be fought for. We have only one life, so it cannot be wasted! Christ has come to us, please do not turn away from him, let's welcome Him with joy.

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