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Angelus: the Kingdom of God is already in our midst

The meaning of the Kingdom of God, to which John the Baptist invites us to convert, was the theme chosen by the Holy Father for his habitual reflection before the Sunday Angelus today. With the same words as the Baptist, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”, Jesus starts His mission in Galilee; and gives the announcement that will bring the disciples on their first missionary experience.

“This word is very important”, explained Francis. “‘The Kingdom of God is among you’, says Jesus. And John announces that Jesus will say later: ‘The kingdom of God has come, has arrived, is in your midst’. This is the central message of all Christian mission. When a missionary, a Christian, goes to proclaim Jesus, he does not go to proselytise, as if he were a fan looking for more followers for his team. No, he simply goes to announce: ‘The kingdom of God is among you’. And in this way the missionary prepares the way for Jesus, Who encounters His people”.

“But what is this Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven? They are synonyms”, said the Holy Father. “We immediately think of something to do with the afterlife: eternal life. Of course, this is true, God’s Kingdom will extend endlessly beyond earthly life, but the good news that Jesus brings – and that John anticipates – is that we do not need to await this Kingdom of God in the future: it is already present and we are able to experience right now this spiritual power. ‘The kingdom of God is among you’, Jesus will say. God comes to establish His dominion in our history, in each day, in our life; and where it is accepted with faith and humility, love, joy and peace flourish”.

The condition for entering this Kingdom and becoming part of it is to “make a change in our lives, that is, to convert. Convert every day, one step forward each day. ... It means leaving the comfortable but misleading streets, the idols of this world: success at all costs, power at the expense of the weak, thirst for wealth, pleasure at any price. Instead it means opening the way for the Lord Who comes. He does not take away our freedom, but gives us true happiness. With the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, it is God Himself Who has come to dwell among us, to free us from selfishness, sin and corruption, as these attitudes are of the devil: pursuing success at all costs; seeking power at the expense of the weakest; thirsting for wealth and seeking pleasure at any price”.

“Christmas is a day of great joy, also exterior, but is primarily a religious event for which spiritual preparation is needed”, the Pope observed. “In this Advent season, let us be guided by the exhortation of John the Baptist:

'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths'. We prepare the way of the Lord and straighten His paths, when we examine our conscience, when we watch our attitudes, to eliminate the sinful attitudes I mentioned, which are not of God: success at all costs, seeking power at the expense of the weakest, thirst for riches and pleasure at any price".

"May the Virgin Mary prepare the encounter with this ever greater love, which is what Jesus brings, and which on Christmas, was made small, like a seed fallen into the earth. And Jesus is this seed: the seed of the Kingdom of God", he concluded.

After praying the Angelus, the Pope gave special greetings to Spanish faithful from Cordoba, Jaén and Valencia; Croatians from Split and Makarska, and two Roman parishes, wishing everyone a good Sunday and a good Advent journey, "this preparing of the path for the Lord, converting every day".

He also reminded those present that Thursday, 8 December will be the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and he invited prayer in these days for her maternal intercession for the conversion of hearts and the gift of peace. "Please, do not forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch; see you on Thursday".
