

## MEDITATION 3

Mark 1: 4-5

<sup>4</sup>"So John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup> And the whole Judean region and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins."

Even before the good news of Jesus the Christ is offered us (Mark 1:1), a way needs to be prepared, and this way involves clearing a path within us, a journey through a wilderness (Mark 1:2-3) so that we can hear and inwardly receive the good news that will be given. This preparation, spoken through ancient prophecy, also comes with the words and the figure of a human being named: John the Baptist. What is the message he proclaims as preparation we must undergo more specifically?

**"A baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."**

**Baptism** in the ancient world also meant "purification" as much as the start of something new. One needed purification in order to then start something new. But purification can have all kinds of meanings for us, some good and some not so good.

Some of us have been made to feel like we're dirty, inadequate, stained, flawed, needing cleansing of some kind...

Have you ever been made to feel dirty, inadequate or flawed in your life?...

Have you ever come to question whether such feelings of impurity have actually been imposed on you by a social world of ideas and beliefs, maybe carried by elders in your life or by society or the church, ideas and beliefs that must be questioned and rejected?...

How do we distinguish a purification that must be rejected so that we embrace ourselves more fully in who we are, from a purification that is actually important and necessary where we must address issues and wrongs in our lives that require some kind of redress and change?...

Come, Holy Spirit come... Help me discern... Give me the courage to take responsibility for my life and my actions no matter what the circumstances or how the actions and inactions of others have played a part...

Such discernment and purification are part of a "baptism" and essential for every new beginning at every moment of our lives... Are you ready for such a baptism once again?...

**Repentance** literally means a 180 degree turn around... That's the kind of change required of people who are truly ready to begin in a new way... But for many of us that's not the kind of change needed necessarily... What kind of repentance change is needed in your life at this

time?... What must be let go and pushed away?... What must be taken up and committed to in a new way?... Repentance is a recognition that change is needed. Change is always happening around us and within us. But what change is essential as a choice you need to make with intention, commitment and perseverance?....

Come, Holy Spirit, come and help me make the change I'm maybe avoiding, denying is necessary or simply afraid or reluctant to make...

**Forgiveness of sins** is the promise - forgiveness from those who have been negatively impacted by our actions or inactions. But will they forgive us? Maybe or maybe not. Have we fully done our part? If so, we need strength and peace to let go and let be... We need to forgive ourselves... We need to forgive others... Maybe they should have known better but didn't... Maybe we should have known better but didn't... But we can only take responsibility for ourselves in the end... We need to make peace with that if we are to move on and be reconciled with life and possibility... We need forgiveness for our sin... We need to forgive others of theirs...

#### **PRAYER:**

Come, Holy Spirit, come... Purify me of the ways I have been made to feel dirty, and purify me of the ways dirt has distorted the way I have treated others as much as myself...

Come, Holy Spirit, come... Give me the courage to repent of the ways I dishonour the gift of life you have given me by resisting change on the one hand or letting change toss me here and there without cultivating a solid foundation to rest on...

Come, Holy Spirit, come... Open up forgiveness in my life... forgiveness received... forgiveness embraced... and forgiveness given...

Give rest to my spirit and anticipation of stepping into newness on my journey ahead... Calm the fears I carry about what may come... Help me believe that new possibilities lie ahead beyond what I may imagine... Amen.

