

FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters



In a recent survey the British were declared the worst dressed people in Europe.

The French are turned out in elegance and style. Italians have a Mediterranean flair. But the British are relegated to last place when it comes to fashion sense. The frumpy tweed jacket and knotted hanky are no match for their continental cousins.

John the Baptist was not British, but he would have come in last on the catwalk. Dressed in camel's hair and a leather belt, he would have stuck out like a sore thumb here in Bergen County.

And yet this odd ball was a magnet for all who saw him. What attracted them? Certainly not his fashion sense! People flocked to him to... acknowledge their sins!

This is the heart of Advent. St. Charles Borromeo says that Advent makes present the fact that the Father sent his only Son to free us from the tyranny of Satan. The Church asks us to understand that Christ, who came once in the flesh, is prepared to come again, when we remove all obstacles to his presence.

The greatest obstacle is sin.

Of course you can't talk about sin today. People can talk about God, they can quote Jesus, they can discuss the Bible. But sin must never be mentioned. Ours is another anthropology, that of the *'Bon Savage.'* We are all fundamentally good, we have an innate beatitude, we are all children of God. Everyone goes to heaven. We have no sin. We have a musical soul.

Post modernity proclaims there is no objective truth. There are opinions, and everyone is entitled to their opinion, to do what they think best. There is a gradualism of conscience. The truth, the good, what is right, is dictated at an individual level.

John the Baptist was having none of this. He proclaimed repentance and a Baptism for forgiveness of sin. The amazing thing is that people took him seriously. They accepted that they were, in fact, sinners.

Perhaps this is not so surprising. A recent psychological report said that many of the complexes people suffer from can be traced to one thing: a radical lack of humility. Humility is the truth. The truth is that we are flawed, we are sinners, we are in need of repentance, we are in need of the grace of God. When this truth is not present, we live in an alienation, a false reality.

John the Baptist's voice will resound in the Gospel at Mass today. It will be a sobering dose of reality. We will be confronted with our brokenness, but also the great truth that we can be freed from the tyranny of Satan.

May we hear the Baptist's voice, and receive his message, no matter what clothes he might be wearing!

Fr. Sean