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3 December 2024 - Tuesday of the 1st week of Advent

[Isaiah 11, 1-10; Luke 10, 21-24](#)

Homily

The Gospel we have just read includes a number of points of contact with the Magnificat of the Virgin Mary, which are very interesting and extremely revealing.

When Jesus gives glory to his Father for having revealed to little ones the things hidden from the wise, the little ones He is talking about are His disciples. And these were not naïve children. They were grown men who knew the ways of the world: Matthew, the tax collector, knew how to make money; Jude, the Zealot, knew the art of guerrilla warfare; Peter, James and John were fishermen who knew how to guide their boat on the lake and cast the net. They had given up everything to become disciples of Jesus. When Jesus invites them -- and us -- to simplicity of heart, He is not inviting us to a childish attitude or a childish type of spirituality. He is inviting us to a very demanding form of poverty of heart. He invites us to follow Him as disciples and therefore to abandon all our sources of security, and especially our thirst for power, in the same way that His disciples abandoned everything to follow Him.

The great characteristic of children is their powerlessness. A child can be, in his own way, as intelligent, loving, etc. as an adult. But because he has not yet accumulated knowledge, material possessions and social relationships, he is powerless. As soon as we become adults, we want to exercise power and control: over our own lives, over other people, over material things, and sometimes even over God. This is what Jesus asks us to give up when He asks us to be like little children.

A useful exercise in self-knowledge might be to examine the various forms in which our thirst for power is expressed in different aspects of our lives, and how we defend that power. Let us then contemplate our Lord who came not as a mighty king on his throne, but as a little child in a manger.

It is in His light that we must reread the first reading (from the Book of Isaiah) and see in it the message that God wants a humanity without borders, without wars, without wolves and snakes, without violent men. He wants a humanity marked by harmony - harmony between men and women, between human beings and their environment; a humanity marked by justice, with no privileges, no oppressed poor, no unfair judges; a humanity where nations will no longer be separated by the

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mountains and ravines of their religions, their political credos, their theological or philosophical systems. In a word, the humanity that Pope Francis expresses in his encyclical *Laudato si*.

Isaiah's prophecy paints a picture where the little boy leads together the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the kid, the calf and the young lion; where the cow and the bear will have the same pasture, the lion will eat with the ox; and where the infant will play on the cobra's nest. Yes, history is moving in this direction. And yet the daily newspapers remind us that violence and the thirst for power and money are still with us. So many daily crimes remind us that not everyone is yet filled with a spirit of love and peace... Are we?

Is this a utopia? Of course! Just like the call to be perfect like our heavenly Father. A utopia to which it is worth devoting our whole lives. An ideal and a goal that we can only reach by one path, that of conversion. And that was what the Spirit of the desert, speaking through the mouth of John, demanded of everyone. The radical conversion that the Pharisees and Sadducees were unable to achieve, we can no more achieve than they. We need the baptism of fire: that is, the action of the Spirit, the burning wind of the desert, consuming all the impurities and defilements of our lives and hearts.

Today we celebrate also the memory of Saint Francis Xavier