

December 15, 2025 - 3rd Sunday in Advent

“Knocking at the door of the heart” by Pr Julio Romero

Luke 3:7-18

We believe that one important element in a growing church is hospitality. The more welcoming and inviting a congregation is, the higher the chances are that a new person will stay and make that church their home.

I don't think John the Baptist had the same idea when he called those who heard his voice and invitation to come to the River Jordan to be baptized with a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. John called those people who came to be baptized by him “Brood of Vipers.” In other words, he called them “Children of Vipers, Children of Snakes,” certainly not an inviting or welcoming greeting from John.

Why would John call the crowd “Children of Snakes?” Especially when these were people who answered his call to repent and be baptized? That would not have gained John new disciples or followers. But new disciples or followers were not what John was looking for.

John the Baptist was an advocate of justice and fairness. He was a dreamer; he wanted a change in the world, a type of world similar to the one you and I would want as well.

In this Gospel, we clearly see his strong feelings toward a fair world, toward the need for turning individuals and entire communities into places of compassion, human solidarity, and social justice. He thought that if the King of Kings was on his way, we could welcome Him with a renewed and repentant heart and with a renewed society—a renewed world. So, when the crowd asked him, “What then should we do to achieve it?” in reply, John said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” And to the soldiers, he said, “Do not extort money from

anyone by threats or false accusations and be satisfied with your wages.”

John wouldn't have given that answer if everyone had a coat to wear, their daily bread three times a day, and no abuse of power. You can tell that John's heart was not as rough and rustic as his physical appearance and tongue suggested.

What he says tells me that he was a sensitive, compassionate man—someone who had a good vision of God's plans and a strong sense of God's dreams for this world.

John the Baptist was definitely in tune with God. It was as if God had knocked on the door of John's heart, and John had let Him in. And so, John, in turn, knocked on the doors of people's hearts with his message of a baptism of repentance, with his message about producing good fruits, with his message about human love, justice, compassion, and solidarity.

It reminds me of a very innocent, simple and “out of the mouths of babes” type of story:

“A nurse on the Pediatric Ward, before listening to the little ones' heartbeat, would plug the stethoscope into their ears and let them listen to their own hearts. Their eyes would always light up with awe, but she never got a response to equal four-year old David's comment. She tucked the stethoscope gently into his ears and placed the disk over his heart. “Listen,” she said...“What do you suppose that is?”

He drew his eyebrows together in a puzzled line and looked up as if lost in the mystery of the strange tap-tap-tapping deep in his chest. Then his face broke out in a wondrous grin, and he asked, “Is that Jesus knocking?”

John knew that there was going to be someone greater than him, whose knock on people's hearts would bring a radical change in everyone who would let Him in. This is what John said about him: “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is

coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

When I read these lines from the Gospel of Luke, I hear John talking to all of us. The one who John said was much greater than him began knocking at people’s hearts the moment He began His ministry. And since then, Jesus has not stopped knocking at people’s hearts. Jesus is asking us to let Him into our hearts so that we can experience change, transformation, and a rebirth of our character.

Remember that we never stop changing. The person I am today is not the same person I was twenty or thirty years ago—or even five years ago. One thing I value the most now is “Peace”: peace in my soul and with the people around me. I don’t think I see things the same way I did twenty or even fifteen years ago. We change, but if we are going to continue changing, why not let the One who knows what is best for us help us make those changes? That is our Lord Jesus Christ.

He is knocking at the doors of our hearts. Let’s let Him in. He will give us the peace that surpasses all understanding, even in the middle of storms or darkness. There are some rough corners in all of us that need to be made smooth. Perhaps we need to be more empathetic, more compassionate, generous, forgiving, more understanding, to control our temper, to learn to love justice, and to accept others for who they are. There are many things we need to change, but we realize we can’t do it alone. We need God in our lives. He is always knocking, wanting to come in to help us change.

On the other hand, perhaps we think we are okay with who we are. Perhaps we refuse to change, even though deep down we know there are things we are not comfortable with. Change is not easy, especially when it’s about us.

A lady was out hitting all the local garage sales when she came across an old needlepoint picture that read, "Prayer Changes

Lives." She bought it, took it home and began to look for just the right place to hang the new picture. Finally, she decided that it went well in the dining room over the dining room table.

With great pride she admired her garage sale discovery and could hardly wait to show it to her husband. That evening when her husband arrived home from work, she showed the picture to him, but he made no indication one way or another of his likes or dislikes of the new picture.

The next day as the lady was cleaning the house, she discovered that the new picture was gone. As she continued to clean the house, she discovered the picture behind a bookcase. She thought, "That's strange," and re-hung the picture in its original location. The next day, to her dismay, she discovered the picture gone again and again discovers it behind the bookcase.

When the husband arrives home, she confronts her husband and asks him if he is displeased with the art of the needlepoint, to which he responds, "No, not at all, it is a great work of art."

She continues, "Is it the place? Do you not like the place it is hung?" He says, "No, not at all. It is in a great location."

She concludes that it must be the message, and she asks him if it's the message that he doesn't like. He says, "No, not at all, the message is great."

Finally, she says, "Then what's the problem?" He says, "I just don't like change."

Well, the message of John the Baptist is one of change. Change is the meaning of repentance. If we can't do it alone or refuse to do it, let's remember that our Lord Jesus is always knocking at the doors of our hearts. He wants to see that change, that transformation in our lives. Let's open our hearts to Him so we can see the changes that we need. Amen.