

THEME 2

PERSONAL PRAYER

Mk 1: 1 - 8

'The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.²As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way;³the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" ⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Tips for personal prayer:

Mark begins his gospel with these words: "Beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God." And what is this good news that the evangelist already anticipates to us? It is a new relationship with God which is based on the acceptance of the Spirit, a dynamic force within humanity. The evangelist continues this presentation by adding: "As it is written in the prophet Isaiah...", but in reality he presents three texts. The first is the book of Exodus, the second is the prophet Malachi, and finally the third Isaiah. Why this one? At that time they never quoted a passage from the prophets without supporting it with one from the law.

The evangelist puts together several concepts, the first "Behold, before you I send my messenger", which is the announcement of liberation linked to the first exodus, the one from slavery in Egypt, and then "He will prepare your way", with which the evangelist modifies Malachi who had said "Behold, I will send a messenger to prepare the way before me". Now, God's way is Jesus' way. And then finally the text of the prophet Isaiah concerning the second exodus, the one from Babylon, "Voice of one who cries out in the desert" (or from the desert), "Prepare the way of the Lord, straighten his paths". This exodus (exodus means a collective liberation from a state of oppression and the arrival in a promised land) will not be possible without the collaboration of all. It will not be something that comes down from above, but something that must involve people. (A. Maggi)

- = The Gospel emphasizes that the coming of the Kingdom requires cooperation between God and humanity. Can you see how God calls others, together with you, to this collaboration?
- = Collaboration with God and humanity requires conversion: what does such "baptism" call you to, personally?
- = What invitations to collaborate does the Spirit make to you in your ministerial and community commitment?