

Tuesday 22nd December 2020

Advent, Tuesday of 4th week

Reading: Lk.1,76-80

V.80a *“And the child grew and became strong in spirit.”*

At this point John, a small child still, knows nothing of his sending to prepare the way for the Lord. But it is what he grows towards. John will shape up to be what God has called him to be – “a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe” (Jn.1,7) There will be both happiness and suffering along the way, but the goal will not shift nor will it be missed.

For this calling and sending John is being prepared not just physically but also spiritually. Indeed, the aspect of spiritual formation in the shaping of what John is meant to be and to do is the one that is here emphasised.

In this little phrase which concludes the events leading up to the nativity, we’re given a hint that the coming of the Lord, the Redeemer, is about a spiritual formation – that of the person of faith, the community of believers. In Eph.3 there is this description of the nature of the growth of faith:

“speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

Spiritual formation is something that needs to be given due attention, as Paul makes clear in his encouragement to Timothy, which shows us also the means of such formation: *“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* (2Tim.3,14-16)

Lord God, help us to become strong in spirit and wise unto the spiritual formation of those in our care. Amen