

“And what is it ...that we should do?”

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, on a sunny day in September 1972, a street-preacher appeared on a busy corner in downtown Pittsburgh. As the office workers hurried by on their way to lunch, the street preacher would raise his right arm, point a boney finger at a passing, office worker and shout, **“Guilty!”** Then he would stiffen up, pause for a few seconds, and start again. **“Guilty!”**

A doctor, who did a study on this sort of phenomenon, observed in his book:

**“The effect on the pedestrians was almost eerie.
They would glance at the preacher, look away, glance back, and then hurry on.”**

No doubt, John the Baptist, of whom I/deacon just read to you from today’s Gospel, had a similar effect on people when he showed up on the banks of the Jordan.

Some people, undoubtedly, ridiculed him. Some were angered by him. **BUT**, & there’s that proverbial **BUT** in life already, my friends, others knew, deep down in their hearts, that they were, indeed, guilty of... wrongdoing.

For example, we read in today’s Gospel, tax collectors **KNEW** they were guilty of overcharging people. Soldiers **KNEW** they were guilty of bullying people. And all the people **KNEW** they were guilty of **not** sharing their surplus with those who did not have, even, the necessities of life.

The doctor, who made these sorts of observations, is named ‘Menninger,’ Dr. Karl Menninger, often referred to as the **‘Dean of American Psychiatry.’** The book, in which he made these uncanny observations, is titled, of all things:

“Whatever Became of Sin?”

This is the point of Dr. Menninger’s book: many people, today, are guilty of wrongdoing. **BUT THAT’S not** what bothers the good doctor. That’s **not** what alarms him. What bothers **and** alarms him is that so many people today refuse to **ADMIT** they’re guilty of **any** wrongdoing.

That’s why the street-preacher’s single word –**‘guilty’**—had such an eerie affect on the Pittsburgh office workers. And, like the street-preacher, John the Baptist confronted the people where they were most vulnerable –in their hearts.

John challenged the people to look into their hearts and to acknowledge their sinfulness. And he did more:

**He challenged them to look into their hearts and DO something about what they saw.
He challenged them to turn away from their sins and to turn back to God.**

Well, fine and dandy!

**‘BUT, how does any of this apply, in a practical way, to our lives?’ you ask.
Well ... ‘fine and dandy!’ I am so-o glad you asked that question!**

For the answer, we must focus again on Dr. Menninger's story of the street-preacher.

All of us are guilty of wrongdoing in our lives. If there is any doubt about this, we need only read the First Letter (epistle) of St. John. There, the apostle says with uncharacteristic bluntness:

**"If we say, 'We are without sin,' we deceive ourselves....
If we say, 'We have not sinned,' we make [God] a liar, and his Word is not in us." 1 Jn. 1:8, 10**

I am awfully glad John spoke about our sinfulness & I am awfully glad he spoke about it so bluntly. The reason I am so glad about this is because it makes it easier for us to admit what Dr. Menninger says we must admit to --for our own psychological and spiritual health, for our own good.

Put very simply: **We must admit... that we are sinners.**

In other words, even though we are beautiful people; even though we are lovable people, the fact remains... we are imperfect, vulnerable people. Consequently, we can be impatient people, intolerant people, jealous/envious people; we can be gossipy-people, selfish people, insecure people. God knows... the list goes on.

Consequently, being bluntly honest, there are areas in our lives that need to be presented to Jesus for healing and forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, in Confession. Advent is a time to turn away from any sin in our lives and turn, ever more, to Jesus.

You see, if we are **sinless** people, then we really don't need Jesus, for we are already **saved** people. On the other hand, if we are **NOT** sinless, then it's time for repenting our sins, confessing them sacramentally, and opening our hearts to Jesus, our Savior. If you 'missed' getting to the 'Light is On' for Reconciliation on last Wed., Dec. 9th (for whatever reason), we'll be having more opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

During Christmas-week, Mon., Tue., & Wed., that is, Dec. 21, 22, & 23:
we will hear Confessions at 9am & 7 pm on Mon., the 21st.
Then, on Tue. & Wed., the 22nd & 23rd, we will 'hear' at 9 am, 11am, & 7pm. No Confessions on Thursday, Christmas Eve, when we start the 'run' of Masses: 4, 8, & 10pm.
All these times are in the bulletin...but, of course, everyone in the county will be calling on the phone for that information!

At any rate, this will be an excellent way to prepare for the birth of our Savior.

I now close, sharing with you a prayer that was written over 1,600 years ago by an early Christian named Origen:

**"Jesus, my feet are dirty...
Pour water in your basin and come, wash my feet.
I am overbold, I know, in asking this, **BUT**...
I dread the consequence of your warning, when you said:
'If I do not wash your feet,
You can have no companionship with me.'
Wash my feet, then,
Because I do want to be your companion.
Amen."**

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.