

What Do WE Do?

I. To prepare for the Messiah John preached a conversion of heart and mind. People obviously heard and listened, leading them to ask what that meant. For each person it was the same thing, yet different, depending on their job. People who had should share food or clothing if another had none. Tax collectors should not collect more than the law allowed. Soldiers were told to treat people with. I was curious why soldiers would also ask what they should do. One scripture scholar says they were not Roman soldiers; more likely temple guards who were themselves Jewish. They too accepted John's challenge. What John told all the groups to do was probably not what they were expecting. It was not some herculean task, impossible to complete. No long pilgrimage across burning desert sands nor a hike up one of the sacred mountains. Just do your job right: give up extortion, blackmail, gouging and greed [Sacra Pagina, p. 66]. Every woman, child and man could do that...*if they wanted to*. Hearing John's call to repentance and his challenge created an atmosphere of hope that things could really be better for people. And who knows, maybe the Messiah was really coming this time.

Concl. As John's *message* was nothing new, neither was his *advice* to the people new: do your job; respect your neighbor as yourself. That did not place an impossible burden on the people, tax collectors, soldiers or anybody else. John *was* asking for a change in attitude accompanied by corresponding action. Something that would be proof of a conversion of heart.

Most of our preparations for Christmas are about showing our love and appreciation for the people in our lives. And possibly strangers who don't know us but who will be blessed by our anonymous generosity. But what about our attitudes, judgments and biases? That can be difficult to reflect on, but not impossible to change. We also hope things can be different and better in our world. As we draw closer to celebrating the birth of the Messiah, like the tax collectors and soldiers we also might ask each day: what should we do? **We already know.**

Fr. Michael Pendergraft
December 16, 2018