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Matthew 3:1-12

LIFE AND FRUITFULNESS

John the Baptist, the point of transition from the Old to the New Testaments, from *religion* to *faith*, invites us to welcome that love *which has now become a Presence* alongside us, because love—a gift—can only be received. It is not something to be understood, studied or learned. It is a presence to be welcomed gratuitously. It cannot be merited by a display of self-serving, of false religiosity, in the manner of the *Sadducees* and *Pharisees*—the “pious religious” of the time of Jesus and of every time. To these, the Baptist says: “Don’t think it is enough to claim: ‘We have Abraham as our father.’”

It is not enough to simply call oneself a Christian, just as it is not enough to be baptized, attend Mass, recite prayers or receive the sacraments. *To simply say* “I belong to Christ” is insufficient. Such a claim is not a *talisman* against the storms of life, nor is it an “insurance policy” against the darker aspects of everyday life. Instead, being a Christian must define, pervade and shape our life by means of a way of behaving marked by goodness, care and forgiveness. It is this that proclaims and witnesses to the world that we belong to the Lord of Life: “By their fruits, you will know them.”

Therefore we must *bear fruit*—indeed, *good fruit*—declares the Baptist. And fruit is always the result of what we are. Each fruit is produced by a tree that is firmly rooted in the soil from which it draws the energy it needs.

It is therefore a matter of *welcoming, of coming into contact*, with Life—the wellspring that dwells in us—in order to experience being transformed, made fertile and able to bear good fruit.

From the book:
Ogni storia è storia sacra
by Paolo Scquizzato.
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*Prepare a way
for the Lord;
make his paths straight!
All humanity will see the salvation of God.*

(Lk. 3:4, 6)