

Dear Beloved Parishioners,

"Hot-button issues" are facts, ideas, events, persons--*anything*--that's too hot to handle in a sermon (or an article like this) or in conversation with *anyone* you don't want to rile up. Unless you like a fight, you don't talk about Republican or Democrat virtues or vices in mixed company. Unless you don't mind making enemies, you don't criticize the sitting President, or speak for immigrant rights or anything that sounds like it's going toward "Pro-life" or "Pro-Choice." **Hot** buttons: *Ouch!*

John the Baptist was not afraid of offending the "brood of vipers" who came to his wilderness to parse his sentences looking for reasons to dismiss his preaching. He was preparing the way for the Word of God, for Jesus who would call the same leadership group "hypocrites."

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks to the crowds about John and about John's simplicity, poverty (strange virtues then, as now). He concludes his commentary on John: "Among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." John's prophetic spirit drives his speech challenging the routine way of life around him. Jesus affirms John's work and, with his own words and his own personal witness, carries the message beyond John's.

The work, the *mission* of Jesus was to turn the human way of life into God's way of life, and in this way to "gather into one" all the scattered children of God--poor and rich, Republicans and Democrats, women and men, straight-talkers and hypocrites: God's children of every variety. The psalm for today's Mass expresses the hope of the powerless, the longing of all who live in the shadow of death and sin. That's *us*. "Lord, come and save us!"

God bless us with love for one another.

Msgr. Mike and Fr. Albert

