

Sunday 3th (A) of Advent

Gospel text (Mt 11,2-11): When John the Baptist heard in prison about the activities of Christ, he sent a message by his disciples, asking him: «Are you the one who is to come or should we expect someone else?». Jesus answered them, «Go back and report to John what you hear and see: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead are brought back to life and good news is reaching the poor. And how fortunate is the one who does not take offense at me».

As the messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, «When you went out to the desert, what did you expect to see? A reed swept by the wind? What did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? People who wear fine clothes live in palaces. What did you actually go out to see? A prophet? Yes, indeed, and even more than a prophet. He is the man of whom Scripture says: ‘I send my messenger ahead of you to prepare the way before you’. I tell you this: no one greater than John the Baptist has come forward among the sons of women, and yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he».

«No one greater than John the Baptist has come forward among the sons of women»

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Today, as in last Sunday, the Church familiarizes us with the figure of John the Baptist. He had many disciples and a clear and well-differentiated tenet: for the Publicans, for the soldiers, for the Pharisees and Sadducees... His desire was to prepare Messiah's public life. First he sent John and Andrew; today he sends others so they could know Him too. They ask him: «Are you the one who is to come or should we expect someone else?» (Mt 11:3). John certainly knew who Jesus was. He

himself bears witness to that: «And I had no knowledge who He was, but He who sent me to give baptism with water said to me, ‘The one on whom you see the Spirit coming down and resting, it is he who gives baptism with the Holy Spirit’» (Jn 1:33). And Jesus responds with facts: the blind see, the lame walk...

John had a firm disposition about his way of life and about sticking to the Truth, which, eventually, brought imprisonment and martyrdom to him. Even in his prison he expeditiously speaks to Herod. John teaches us how to combine a firm character with meekness: «The one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie» (Jn 1:27); «He must become greater; I must become less» (Jn 3:30); he exults at the fact Jesus baptizes more disciples than him, as he only considers himself as “the friend who attends the bridegroom” (cf. Jn 3:29).

In short: John teaches us to seriously consider our mission on earth: to be tenacious Christians knowing how to behave as sons of God. We should be asking us: —How did Mary and Joseph prepare themselves for Jesus Christ's birth? How did John prepare Jesus' teachings? How do we prepare ourselves to commemorate it and for the second advent of our Lord at the end of time? As Cyril of Jerusalem said: «We preach not one advent only of Christ, but a second also, far more glorious than the former. For the former gave a view of His patience; but the latter brings with it the crown of a Divine Kingdom».