

Sunday 3th (C) of Advent

Gospel text (Lk 3,10-18): The people asked John, «What are we to do?». And John answered, «If you have two coats, give one to the person who has none; and if you have food, do the same». Even tax collectors came to be baptized and asked him, «Master, what must we do?». John said to them, «Collect no more than your fixed rate». People serving as soldiers asked John, «What about us? What are we to do?». And he answered, «Don't take anything by force or threaten the people by denouncing them falsely. Be content with your pay».

The people were wondering about John's identity, «Could he be the Messiah?». Then John answered them, «I baptize you with water, but the one who is coming will do much more: he will baptize you with Holy Spirit and fire. As for me, I am not worthy to untie his sandal. He comes with a winnowing fan to clear his threshing floor and gather the grain into his barn. But the chaff he will burn with fire that never goes out». With these and many other words John announced the Good News to the people.

«The one who is coming will do much more»

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Today, well into Advent, God's word introduces us to Jesus Christ's precursor: Saint John the Baptist. God the Father is preparing the arrival, that is, the Advent, of His Son, born of the Virgin Mary, in many different ways, as the beginning of the Letter to the Hebrews (1.1), says: Patriarchs, Prophets and Kings prepared Jesus' arrival.

We see both genealogies, in Matthew's and Luke's Gospels. Jesus Christ son of

Abraham, son of David. Moses, Isaiah and Jeremiah announced His Advent and described the features of His Ministry. But Saint John the Baptist, as can be seen in his liturgy (Preface of his feast day), would be the one to point him out to the world, and the privilege of Baptizing our Lord went —mysteriously!— to him. His was to be the very last testimony before Jesus' arrival. And he gave it with his life, with his death and with his word. His birth was also announced, like that of Jesus, and was prepared, as seen in Luke's Gospel (chapters 1 and 2). And his death, as a martyr, victim of a king's weakness and of a wicked woman's hatred, also prepared the way for that of Jesus. This is why, he receives the most extraordinary praise from Jesus himself, which can be read in Matthew's and Luke's Gospels (cf. Mt 11:11; Lk 7:28): «I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John». John, who would have known of all this praise, is however an example of humility: he tells us today, «I am not worthy to untie his sandal» (Lk 3:16). And, according to Saint John (3:30): «He must increase while I must decrease».

Let us listen today to his word, exhorting us to share what we have and to respect the justice and dignity everybody deserves. Thus, we shall be preparing ourselves to receive He who is coming to save us, and will come again to «judge the living and the dead».