

Weekdays of Advent: December 24th

Gospel text (Lk 1,67-79): Zechariah, filled with holy spirit, sang this canticle, «Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has come and redeemed his people. He has raised up for us a victorious Savior in the house of David his servant, as he promised through his prophets of old, salvation from our enemies and from the hand of our foes. He has shown mercy to our fathers and remembered his holy covenant, the oath he swore to Abraham, our father, to deliver us from the enemy, that we might serve him fearlessly as a holy and righteous people all the days of our lives. And you, my child, shall be called prophet of the Most High, for you shall go before the Lord to prepare the way for him and enable his people to know of their salvation when he comes to forgive their sins. This is the work of the mercy of our God, who comes from on high as a rising sun shining on those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, and guiding our feet into the way of peace».

«Comes from on high as a rising sun shining on those who live in darkness»

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Today, the Gospel gathers Zechariah's song of praise after the birth of his son. In its first part John the Baptist's father thanks God, and in the second, his eyes look forward into the future. He oozes joy and hope on recognizing the salvific action of God toward Israel, which culminates in the coming of the Messiah, prepared by his own son John.

We already know that Zechariah had been punished by God because of his skepticism. Now, however, that the divine action has been made real—as he has recovered his ability to speak—says what he before could express only in his heart: «Blessed be the Lord God of Israel» (Lk 1:68). How Many times do we see the dark side of things, negatively, in a pessimistic way! If only we had the supernatural

vision of the facts that Zechariah shows in the Benedictus, we would be constantly living in joy and hope.

«The Lord is at hand; the Lord is here». The forerunner's father is conscious of the fact that the arrival of the Messiah means, above all, light. A light that illuminates those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death. Us! May we realize with full consciousness that Jesus came to illuminate our lives, that he is coming to guide us, to point out the way to go... It would be great if we were to allow Him guide us with His desires, with the hope he has invested in us!

Jesus is the “Lord” (cf. Lk 1:68.76), but he is also the “Savior” (cf. Lk 1:69). These two attributes that Zechariah points to about God, so close to Christmas eve, have always surprised me, because they are precisely the same ones that the Angel of the Lord will assign to Jesus in its announcement to the shepherds and that we will hear touchingly tonight at Midnight Mass. It is God Himself who is born!