

Thursday 2nd of Advent

Gospel text (Mt 11,11-15): Jesus said to the crowds, «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 (...). Up to the time of John, there was only prophesy: all the prophets and the Law; and if you believe me, John is this Elijah, whose coming was predicted. Let anyone with ears listen!».

John the Baptist: the forerunner of God's coming

EDITORIAL TEAM evangeli.net (based on texts by Benedict XVI)

(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today, the figure of John appears deeply rooted in the Old Testament. John the Baptist was a priest, a descendant of Zechariah - priest of the priestly division of Abijah - and Elisabeth – a descendant of the priestly family of Aaron. In John, the priesthood of the Old Covenant leads toward Jesus.

The mission of John is construed on the basis of the figure of Elijah: he is not Elijah, but he comes with the spirit and the strength of the great prophet. With his mission John also meets the expectation of the return of Elijah to purify and relieve the people of God; he would prepare Israel for the coming of the Lord. He is, therefore, included, on the one hand, in the category of the prophets, although, on the other hand, he is simultaneously praised above it because the Elijah who is to come back is the forerunner of the coming of God himself.

—Thus, in these texts the figure of Jesus and his coming are implicitly placed on the same level than God's advent.