Thursday of the Second Week of Advent

Gospel text (*Mt* 11:11-15): Jesus said to the crowds, “Amen, I say to you, 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. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent are taking it by force. All the prophets and the law prophesied up to the time of John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah, the one who is to come. Whoever has ears ought to hear.”

“The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent are taking it by force”

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Today, the Gospel speaks of John the Baptist, the Messiah's Precursor, he who has come to prepare the paths of the Lord. He will stay with us until the sixteenth day, when the first part of Advent comes to an end.

John is a resolute man, who is very aware of the value of things, who is conscious of the fact that struggle is necessary to improve and be holy. That's why Jesus says: “From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent are taking it by force.” (Mt 11:12). The “unyielding” ones are those who are unyielding to themselves: Do I struggle to believe that the Lord loves me too? Do I sacrifice myself to “make myself small”? Do I make the effort to be conscious of the fact that I am my Father's son and live accordingly?

Saint Therese of Lisieux refers to these words from Jesus saying something which can help us in our personal and intimate conversation with the Son of Man: “It is you, oh poverty!, my first sacrifice; I'll be together with you until I die! I know that the athlete, once at the stadium, rids himself of everything in order to run. You, worldly people, can savor the pity and anguish that come from the vanity of your bitter fruits; I, joyous, will get the prize of triumph from poverty”. And me, why do I complain as soon as I sense that I lack something I consider necessary? I wish I could see things as clearly as Therese in all aspects of my life!

In a very mysterious way, Jesus says to us today: “And if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah, the one who is to come. Whoever has ears ought to hear.” (Mt 11:14-15). What does He mean? He wants to make it clear to us that John was his true forerunner, who carried out the same mission as Elijah, according to the belief, which people at that time had that the prophet Elijah was supposed to come back before the

Messiah.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Moses was a very great lawgiver, and all the Prophets were admirable, but not greater than John. It is not I that dare to compare Prophets with Prophets: but their Master and ours declared it” (St Cyril of Jerusalem)

- “I have always been struck by the Lord’s encounter with Elijah. The Lord was not in the hail, in the rain, in the storm, in the wind… The Lord was in the still soft breeze. This is the music of the Lord’s language. As we prepare for Christmas, we should listen to it.” (Francis)

- “St. John the Baptist (…), going before Jesus ‘in the spirit and power of Elijah’ (Lk 1:17), bears witness to Christ in his preaching, by his Baptism of conversion, and through his martyrdom.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 523)