Third Sunday of Advent (A)

Gospel text (*Mt* 11:2-11): When John the Baptist heard in prison of the works of the Christ, he sent his disciples to Jesus with this question, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" Jesus said to them in reply, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."

As they were going off, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out to the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? Then what did you go out to see? Someone dressed in fine clothing? Those who wear fine clothing are in royal palaces. Then why did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way before you. 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."

"Among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist"

Fr. Johannes VILAR
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Today, just as on the previous Sunday, the Church presents to us the figure of John the Baptist. He had many disciples and a clear, well-defined teaching — one message for tax collectors, another for soldiers, another for Pharisees and Sadducees… His mission was to prepare the public ministry of the Messiah. First, he sent John and Andrew; today he sends others so that they may come to know Him. They go with a question: "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" (Mt 11:3). John knew very well who Jesus was. He himself testifies: "I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit'" (Jn 1:33). Jesus answers with facts: the blind see, the lame walk…

John was a man of firm character—both in his way of life and in his fidelity to the Truth—which cost him imprisonment and martyrdom. Even from prison he speaks effectively to Herod. John teaches us how to unite firmness of character with humility: "The one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not

worthy to untie" (Jn 1:27); "He must increase; I must decrease" (Jn 3:30). He rejoices that Jesus baptizes more people than he does, for he considers himself only "the one who has the bride is the bridegroom; the best man" (cf. Jn 3:26).

In a word: John teaches us to take our mission on earth seriously — to be coherent Christians who know and act as children of God. We must ask ourselves: How would Mary and Joseph have prepared for the birth of Jesus Christ? How did John prepare the teaching of Jesus? How do we prepare to commemorate His birth and to welcome His second coming at the end of time? For, as Saint 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."

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "John is the voice that lasts for a time. And the question came: Who are you, then? He replied: I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way for the Lord. What does prepare the way mean, if not 'be humble in your thoughts'?." (Saint Augustine)

- "On this Sunday, the Church, looks forward to the joy of Christmas, and that is why it is called 'Gaudete Sunday'. And the joy of Christmas is a special joy. It is a serene and tranquil joy, a joy that forever accompanies the Christian. Even in difficult moments. When he is a true Christian, the Christian never loses his Peace." (Francis)

- "'Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying: 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe in the gospel'' (Mk 1:14-15). 'To carry out the will of the Father Christ inaugurated the kingdom of heaven on earth'. Now the Father's will is 'to raise up men to share in his own divine life'. He does this by gathering men around his Son Jesus Christ. This gathering is the Church." (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, № 541)