

Third Sunday of Advent (A)

Gospel text (Mt 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, as in last Sunday, the Church familiarizes us with the figure of John the Baptist. He had many disciples and a clear and well-differentiated tenet: for the Publicans, for the soldiers, for the Pharisees and Sadducees... His desire was to prepare the way for the Messiah's public life. First He sent John and Andrew; today He sends others so they could know Him too. They ask Him: “Are you the one who

is to come, or should we look for another?” (Mt 11:3). John certainly knew who Jesus was. He himself bears witness to that: “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). And Jesus responds with facts: the blind see, the lame walk...

John had a firm disposition about his way of life and about sticking to the Truth, which, eventually, brought imprisonment and martyrdom to him. Even in his prison he expeditiously speaks to Herod. John teaches us how to combine a firm character with meekness: “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 exults at the fact Jesus baptizes more disciples than him, as he only considers himself as “The one who has the bride is the bridegroom; the best man” (cf. Jn 3:29).

In short: John teaches us to seriously consider our mission on earth: to be tenacious Christians knowing how to behave as sons of God. We should be asking ourselves: —How did Mary and Joseph prepare themselves for Jesus Christ's birth? How did John prepare Jesus' teachings? How do we prepare ourselves to commemorate Christ's coming, Advent, as well as the second Advent at the end of time? As 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

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“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)

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“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, N° 541)