

Weekdays of Advent: December 23th

Gospel text (Lk 1:57-66): When the time arrived for Elizabeth to have her child she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy toward her, and they rejoiced with her. When they came on the eighth day to circumcise the child, they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, but his mother said in reply, “No. He will be called John.” But they answered her, “There is no one among your relatives who has this name.” So they made signs, asking his father what he wished him to be called. He asked for a tablet and wrote, “John is his name,” and all were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing God. Then fear came upon all their neighbors, and all these matters were discussed throughout the hill country of Judea. All who heard these things took them to heart, saying, “What, then, will this child be?” For surely the hand of the Lord was with him.

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Today, in the first reading we read: “Now I am sending my messenger he will prepare the way before me” (Mal 3:1). John the Baptist fulfills Malachi’s prophecy. He is one of the main characters in the liturgy of Advent. He invites us to prepare ourselves with prayer and penance for the arrival of the Lord. As the collect of today’s Mass says: “Your Son’s birth is near; may the love of He who is the Word made flesh who became man in the Virgin’s womb to live among men, welcome us”.

The Precursor’s birth speaks of the proximity of Christmas. The Lord is at hand!: let’s get ourselves ready! When asked who he was by the priests who had come from Jerusalem, he said: “I am ‘the voice of one crying out in the desert, Make straight

the way of the Lord.” (Jn 1:23).

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, [then] I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me” (Rev 3:20), we read in the Communion antiphone. It is necessary to examine ourselves to see how we are preparing ourselves to receive Jesus this Christmas: God, more than anything, wants to be born in our hearts.

The Precursor's life teaches us the virtues we need to receive Jesus properly; fundamentally, humility of the heart. He acknowledges himself as an instrument of God, to fulfil his vocation, his mission. As Saint Ambrose says: «Do not boast that they call you son of God —let us acknowledge His grace without forgetting our human nature—; do not become proud if you have served well because you have done just what was expected from you. The sun does its job, the moon obeys, and the angels of the Lord do their duty. The instrument chosen by God to serve the Gentiles said: “For I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1Cor 15:9).”

We are looking for the glory of God only. The virtue of humility will help us to prepare ourselves appropriately for the coming festivities.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“Elizabeth is aware of Mary’s presence, but John is aware of the Lord’s: a woman aware of a woman’s presence, the forerunner aware of the pledge of our salvation. The women speak of the grace they have received while the children are active in secret, unfolding the mystery of love with the help of their mothers.” (Saint Ambrose)

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“John announces a greater one who comes after him. His own role is to prepare a path for this mysterious Other, his whole mission is directed toward him. Great things are about to unfold.” (Benedict XVI)

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“John the Baptist is ‘more than a prophet’ (Lk 7:26). In him, the Holy Spirit concludes his

speaking through the prophets. John completes the cycle of prophets begun by Elijah. He proclaims the imminence of the consolation of Israel; he is the 'voice' of the Consoler who is coming (Jn 1:23). As the Spirit of truth will also do, John 'came to bear witness to the light' (Jn 1:7). In John's sight, the Spirit thus brings to completion the careful search of the prophets and fulfills the longing of the angels." (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, N° 719)