

Weekdays of Advent: December 24th

Gospel text (Lk 1:67-79): Zechariah his father, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied, saying: “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; for he has come to his people and set them free. He has raised up for us a mighty Savior, born of the house of his servant David. Through his prophets he promised of old that he would save us from our enemies, from the hands of all who hate us. He promised to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant. This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to set us free from the hand of our enemies, free to worship him without fear, holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life. You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way, to give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins. In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

“The dawn from on high shall break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness”

Fr. Ignasi FABREGAT i Torrents
(Terrassa, Barcelona, Spain)

Today, the Gospel gathers Zechariah's song of praise after the birth of his son. In its first part John the Baptist's father thanks God, and in the second, his eyes look forward into the future. He oozes joy and hope on recognizing the salvation's action of God toward Israel, which culminates in the coming of the Messiah, prepared by his own son John.

We already know that Zechariah had been punished by God because of his skepticism. However, now that the divine action has been made real —as he has

recovered his ability to speak— he says what he before could express only in his heart: “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel” (Lk 1:68). How Many times do we see the dark side of things, negatively, in a pessimistic way! If only we had the supernatural vision of the facts that Zechariah shows in the Benedictus, we would be constantly living in joy and hope.

“The Lord is at hand; the Lord is here”. The forerunner's father is conscious of the fact that the arrival of the Messiah means, above all, light. A light that illuminates those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death. Us! May we realize with full consciousness that Jesus came to illuminate our lives, that he is coming to guide us, to point out the way to go... It would be great if we were to allow Him to guide us with His desires; with the hope He has invested in us!

Jesus is the “Lord” (cf. Lk 1:68.76), but He is also the “Savior” (cf. Lk 1:69). These two attributes that Zechariah points to about God, so close to Christmas eve, have always surprised me, because they are precisely the same ones that the Angel of the Lord will assign to Jesus in its announcement to the shepherds and that we will hear touchingly tonight at Midnight Mass. It is God Himself who is born!

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“We are Your image, and You have become ours, by this union which You have accomplished with man. By this ineffable love of Yours, therefore, I constrain You, and implore You that You do mercy to Your creatures.” (Saint Catherine of Siena)

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“Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man.” (Francis)

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“St. John the Baptist is the Lord's immediate precursor or forerunner, sent to prepare his way (Mt 3:3. He inaugurates the Gospel.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, N° 523)