**THURSDAY DECEMBER 16 – III WEEK OF ADVENT [C]**

**All the people who listened, including the tax collectors, and who were baptized with the baptism of John, acknowledged the righteousness of God; but the Pharisees and scholars of the law, who were not baptized by him, rejected the plan of God for themselves.**

**Now Jesus bears testimony to John the Baptist. What is the purpose of these words of Jesus? John has testified for Jesus. He proclaimed him the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Are these words of God or of man? These are words of God if John is a true prophet. If John is not a true prophet, these are words of man. “When the messengers of John had left.” Jesus does not want the messengers to refer John his testimony. John must remain in his humbleness and faith. In listening the words of Jesus, he might even have become proud. A man can do everything but becoming proud. A man can do everything but inducing a man to pride.**

**Jesus begins to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out to the desert to see - a reed swayed by the wind?” A reed swayed by the wind is a man who follows every wind of doctrine. He is not stable in the truth of God. John is not a reed swayed by the wind. He does not follow the thoughts of men. He is firmly anchored in the truth of God by the Holy Spirit. He says only what the Holy Spirit orders him to do. He does not say what has not been ordered.**

**John is not a reed swayed by the wind. Then what did you go out to see? Someone dressed in fine garments? We know that he wore the scratchy garment of the prophet made of camel’s hair and a leather girdle. “Those who dress luxuriously and live sumptuously are found in royal palaces.” John did not lead a life as a dissolute. He lives in the desert. His food is locust and wild honey. He is not a man of vice, but of virtues. When life is in luxury, it is also in sin. If he is in sin, he cannot be an instrument of salvation. We can save no one from sin. We can save from light, from truth, from grace.**

**Jesus asks a third question to the crowds. John is not a reed swayed by wind. He is not a man cherished by immorality. Who is John, then? “Then what did you go out to see? A prophet?” A man of God? “Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.” Here is the truth about John the Baptist. Not only, is he a prophet. He is also more than a prophet. Why is he more than a prophet? He is more than a prophet as his mission goes beyond the prophecy. The prophet is sent by God to refer the people his Word and show his judgement about the history of men. If a prophet is entitled with other missions, he is more than a prophet. He is a prophet and something else, too. The mission is different.**

**Jesus says why John is more than a prophet. “This is the one about whom scripture says: 'Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, he will prepare your way before you.'” John is prophet and precursor. He precedes the Lord and prepares the way. This prophecy comes from the prophet Malachi. In Malachi, one speaks of a messenger, but one refers to no person in particular. In this circumstance, Jesus reveals that that prophecy is about John the Baptist. If John is the messenger who must prepare the way to the Lord, it means that the messianic times have come. Not even in this circumstance, does Jesus reveals himself as the Messiah of God. However, He says an essential truth for the people of God. The crowds must know that with the coming of John all the ancient prophecies about the Christ of God are fulfilled. If John has come, the Messiah has come too. He has come and he is present among them. It is up to them to recognize him.**

**Let us read the text of Lk 7,24-30**

**When the messengers of John had left, 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 garments? Those who dress luxuriously and live sumptuously are found in royal palaces. Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom scripture says: 'Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, he will prepare your way before you.' I tell you, among those born of women, no one is greater than John; yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." (All the people who listened, including the tax collectors, and who were baptized with the baptism of John, acknowledged the righteousness of God; but the Pharisees and scholars of the law, who were not baptized by him, rejected the plan of God for themselves.)**

**Jesus proclaims the truth about John the Baptist. “I tell you, among those born of women, no one is greater than John." This statement must be intended from Abraham until John. The New Testament begins with the incarnation. All is different. John is the prophet who has been filled with the Holy Spirit since he was in the womb of his mother. His mission is great, most great. He must prepare the hearts to receive their Messiah, their Christ, their Saviour and Redeemer. Jesus adds: “Yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." John is great. The Mother of Jesus is greater. Mary is the Servant of the Lord. His humblest handmaid. Jesus, too, is greater. He is the Servant of the Lord.**

**But the statement of Jesus deals all those who are born from water and Holy Spirit. Not only are they made participants of the divine nature, made adoptive children in the Son Christ Jesus, they are temple of the Holy Spirit, Body of Christ. John has prepared the way to the Lord. They are presence of the Lord in history, missionaries of his truth and of his kingdom, ministries of his Word and of his grace. Some are also givers of the Holy Spirit. The New Covenant is infinitively superior to the Old one. In the New Covenant, all is new. The Law, the Prophecy, the Ministry, the Kingship, the Priesthood, both common and ministerial, the grace, the truth, the life, the holiness, the goods promised.**

**Now Jesus gives a judgement of truth about the mission of John. “All the people who listened, including the tax collectors, and who were baptized with the baptism of John, acknowledged the righteousness of God” Why have they acknowledged the righteousness of God? What is the justice of God? The justice of God is the faithfulness to every Word uttered by Him, both in good and in evil, both for life and for death, both for blessing and for curse, both for paradise and for hell. God would be unrighteous if He did not forgive a man who repents, who converts, who retreats from evil. He has promised. He is obliged, God is acknowledged as righteous as he has promised the repentance of sins and John precisely preached that. A baptism of conversion for the remission of sins. One repents, God forgives. It is righteous.**

**Now, the judgement about those who have not let themselves be baptised by John. “But the Pharisees and scholars of the law, who were not baptized by him, rejected the plan of God for themselves.” God would have wanted to forgive their sins. The way of forgiveness is the conversion and being baptised by John in the Jordan River. The Pharisees and the scholars of the Law have refused the baptism. They remained in their sins. The plan of God of salvation for themselves has been rejected by them. When the Lord sets a way of salvation and man refuses it, there are no other ways of salvation for him. He refused the plan of God. He has rejected it for his life. He remains in his sins. He remains in his spiritual death. One must cry out a truth, especially nowadays. Whoever refuses a way of salvation coming from God, if the refusal is only for his person, he is responsible only for his person. Instead, if with his refusal he induces, tempts, seduces, invites, prompts, deceives others so that they, too, do not believe, this person must know that he is responsible before God and history not only of the eternal perdition, but of all the evil operated in the world because of the refusal of the way of God. One will never think enough about this responsibility. May the Mother of Jesus help us. We want to be always at service of truth, never of falsity.**