**THURSDAY DECEMBER 23 – IV WEEK OF ADVENT [C]**

**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.**

**What the Angel had proclaimed to Zechariah is fulfilled in time. Elizabeth gives birth to a son. The fulfilment of the word of the prophecy, if it is not conditioned, is founded not on the receiver, but on the Omnipotence of God. God is the Lord of his Word. God is the Executioner of each of his will. He can always fulfil his Word, as he is Mighty One. History has never no power over the fulfilment of the Word of the Lord. It cannot neither delay, nor anticipate. Times and moments of the fulfilment of the Word of the Lord are only and exclusively in God. This is the great mystery surrounding us.**

**The birth of the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth is manifestation of the great mercy of God toward Elizabeth. The neighbours and the relatives rejoice with Elizabeth not because she had conceived and given birth to a son, rather because they know that She is subject of the great mercy of God. One hears when one tells, when one speaks, when the news is spread from mouth to mouth. The event of the conceiving and of the labour of Elizabeth has not remained without echo. Everyone speaks of it, but as an event that is fruit of the great mercy of God toward Elizabeth. The Subject of the history, of voices, of the narration is not Elizabeth, it is the Lord who has loved Elizabeth and has made her mother. In Elizabeth God is the one who is celebrated, blessed, thanked. It is for the work of the Lord that one rejoices with her. It is most high justice to always give God what is of God and to men what is of men.**

**On the eighth day, according to the Law of the Lord, every male child was circumcised. With circumcision, one became people of the Covenant, children of the promise, heirs of the blessing. At the moment of circumcision, one gave the name to the child. They wanted to name the child of Elizabeth after his father Zechariah. However, this was not the name given by the angel at the moment of the announcement.**

**The mother opposes that he is named after his father. For the mother, the child must be named John. They say to the mother that there is no one among his relatives who has this name. John cannot be the name to be given to the child. Obviously, they knew nothing of the fact that the name had been given by the Angel in the temple of Jerusalem when he appeared to Zechariah.**

**One asks the father so that he decides the name of the son, Zechariah is unable to talk, not deaf. One can speak to him. There is no need of signs. He is the one who has to make sign because of the knot of his tongue. He does not reply with signs, though. These could even have been interpreted and understood badly. He asks for a tablet. The tablet was of wax and one could write on it with a pen of iron. Zechariah writes on the tablet: “John is his name.” This is his will. This is the name of the child. All were amazed with this choice. It is a prophetic name, linked to the salvation of God. Mysterious is the birth of the child. Mysterious is the name he has. Mysterious will also his history and his mission.**

**Let us read the text of 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.**

**Given the name to the child, every uttered word in the temple by the angel is fulfilled. Now Zechariah can speak. Zechariah speaks and blesses the Lord for the great things He had fulfilled in his house. God is in his house. His prayer has been fulfilled. The child has a great mission. He knows and says it. John’s birth is an extraordinary event, a true fruit of God’s grace and mercy. Zechariah and Elizabeth are like Sarah and Abraham and like many other couples of the Old Testament, couples chose by God to manifest his omnipotence, his mercy, his will to give life to his people Israel. In the house of Zechariah and of Elizabeth, there is the finger of God that works. This is the fear that takes the neighbours. These are the voice that echo throughout the country of Judea. If God has powerfully intervened in this house, it is because He surely wants something great, not in the house of Zechariah but in the house of Israel. Here is the reason why everyone says, "What, then, will this child be?" Will this be as Isaac, as Moses, as Samson, as Samuel, as David, as one of the great Prophet of the past, of their history? What will the Lord ever do for his people through John? This is not a voice that passes. This is a voice that remains. It remains in the heart of everyone. In this child, they see God and his work. This is a voice that impresses itself in the heart and turns for its part into a question and in further voice. This is not a pure and simple voice. This is a voice that makes itself announcement of an imminent salvation that God is going to operate.**

**John the Baptist shows and reveals how great the mercy of the Lord for the salvation of man is. He is deed of God since before his conceiving in the womb of Elizabeth through the work of Zechariah. God, indeed, is the one who gives a son to Zechariah and Elizabeth. He is the one who fills John with the Holy Spirit yet in the womb of the Mother. He is the one who gives John to the Holy Spirit so that no thought of earth pollutes his heart. He is the one who at the moment of the fulfilment of his mission sends down to John the Word he will have to fulfil. There is no one moment of the life of John the Baptist that is not placed in the hands of the Lord and led by Him in the power of his Holy Spirit.**

**Thus, John the Baptist becomes testimony of the truth of every Word the Lord has uttered, sworn, prophesized. What comes out of the mouth of God is fulfilled not by will of man. Man is not able to fulfil any prophecy. Every prophecy is fulfilled for the creating omnipotence of God and through the work of his Holy Spirit. If today we want every prophecy to be fulfilled, every Word of the Gospel to be fulfilled, we must ask the Lord with humble and hopeful prayer that He descends powerfully in our history. But history has always become history of salvation as the Lord has descended among us. When He descends, history becomes of salvation. If He does not descend, history turns for us into history of perdition. Today it is necessary as never before that the Lord descends and takes care about his vineyard that is devastated by every animal living in the wood. It is urgent that He sends his Holy Spirit so that the most pure faith in Christ Jesus shines again. It is urgent that He comes through ways He alone knows to bring back the Church in the purity of the evangelic truth. If He does not descend, we would remain in a history of perdition. If we do not ask that He descends, the responsibility is all ours. We knew that He is the Saviour of the Church and of the world and we have not plead so that He tore heavens and descended to visit his Church and to bring the comfort of his divine and eternal light of truth, justice, mercy, charity. May the Mother of God come to our rescue. May She ask her Son that He comes and brings back his Church in the purity of faith, of hope, of charity.**