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Thursday's Gospel: A Christian's Struggle

Gospel for Thursday in the Second Week of Advent, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 11:11-15*)

Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John; and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah

who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Commentary

The words of Jesus that the Church offers us in today's Gospel passage speak about John the Baptist. Our Lord says that John is a prophet and more than a prophet, since "among those born of women there has arisen no one greater."

He is greater than the great prophets and kings of Israel because "all the prophets and the law prophesied until John."

The kingdom of heaven suffers violence after John's appearance. The Baptist himself is imprisoned for testifying to the truth. And this remains true today. Following Jesus, walking in his footsteps, being a

disciple of Christ and living according to his teachings always means confronting opposition and requires effort.

Our Lord himself, when inviting us to follow him, warns us that “if anyone wants to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.” As Saint Josemaría said, “‘The kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence and the violent are taking it by storm.’ This violence is not directed against others. It is a violence used to fight our own weaknesses and miseries, a fortitude which prevents us from camouflaging our own infidelities, a boldness to own up to the faith even when the environment is hostile.”

This struggle and effort, far from saddening us, will fill us with peace and joy because it will make it easier for us to be closer to God.

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