

Monday, June 22, 2020
Fourth Week after Pentecost

MEDITATION FOR THE DAY

Readings: Romans 9:18-33; Matthew 11:2-15

The context of today's Gospel is this: John has been arrested and put into prison by King Herod. John's ministry is coming to an end, although his disciples continue to baptize as sign of repentance. Jesus is now performing miracles and teaching extensively, and those following Him are increasing in number.

Hearing reports in prison about what Jesus is doing, John sends his disciples to Jesus to ask if He is truly the Promised One. *Why?* John knows that Jesus is the Messiah. This was confirmed for John at the moment he baptized Jesus, when the heavens were opened and the Spirit alighted upon Him (Mt 3:13-17). John has no doubts, but his disciples do. So, John sends his closest disciples to Jesus so that they could shed their mistaken notions about the kind of Messiah to expect, and to come to recognize Jesus as the Promised One.

When John's disciples come to Jesus, He replies to them by pointing to the fact that they were witnessing the signs that the ancient prophets said about the coming Messiah: He would give sight to the blind, heal the lame and the sick, restore hearing to the deaf, raise the dead, and preach good news to the poor and humble. Jesus corrects their mistaken notion that the coming Messiah would assume the role of a powerful earthly ruler.

In his discussion with them, Jesus affirms that John the Baptist is the greatest of all Old Testament prophets. However, he is also the last of the Old Testament prophets, who had been given the mission to prepare the people for the coming Messiah, the Prophet promised by Moses, who would teach with authority and bring good news about salvation and eternal life.

Despite the greatness of John, the gift of the Holy Spirit to be received in the Mystery of Baptism will make the smallest person greater than John. From now on, one must fight for this wonderful gift, to obtain entry in the kingdom of God.

We are all called not to physical violence, but to spiritual battle. The violence is not to be directed against others, but a violence directed against ourselves and the enemies of the soul: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Those who fight against their passions and do themselves violence by denying themselves and dying daily, these are the ones who are attaining the kingdom of heaven and becoming one with Christ. In the words of St. Clement of Alexandria: "The Kingdom of heaven does not belong to those who sleep and who indulge all their desires, but to those who fight against themselves."