July 20th marks the feast day of Prophet Elijah {cimovie}Elijah12.flv|Title|elijah12.jpg{/cimovie}

During the Pope's general audience, held on June 15, 2011, Benedict XVI explained what Elijah can teach us about prayer and unity.

“Elijah’s prayerful attitude was entirely different. He asked the people to draw close, thereby involving it in his action and his supplication. The purpose of the challenge he addressed to the prophets of Baal was to restore to God the people which had strayed, following idols; therefore he wanted Israel to be united with him, to become a participator in and a protagonist of his prayer and of everything that was happening.

Then the prophet built an altar, using, as the text says, “twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying: ‘Israel shall be your name’” (v. 31). Those stones represented the whole of Israel and are the tangible memorial of the story of the choice, predilection and salvation of which the people had been the object. The liturgical gesture of Elijah had crucial importance; the altar was a sacred place that indicated the Lord’s presence, but those stones of which it was made represented the people which now, through the prophet’s mediation was symbolically placed before God, it had become an “altar”, a place of offering and sacrifice”.