

Cycle A 3rd Sunday of Advent

Reading I Is 35:1-6a, 10

The desert and the parched land will exult; the steppe will rejoice and bloom. They will bloom with abundant flowers, and rejoice with joyful song. The glory of Lebanon will be given to them, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God. Strengthen the hands that are feeble, make firm the knees that are weak, say to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not! Here is your God, he comes with vindication; with divine recompense he comes to save you. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared; then will the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the mute will sing. Those whom the LORD has ransomed will return and enter Zion singing, crowned with everlasting joy; they will meet with joy and gladness, sorrow and mourning will flee.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10

R. (Is 35:4) Lord, come and save us.

The LORD God keeps faith forever, secures justice for the oppressed, gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets captives free.

R. Lord, come and save us.

The LORD gives sight to the blind; the LORD raises up those who were bowed down.

The LORD loves the just; the LORD protects strangers.

R. Lord, come and save us.

The fatherless and the widow he sustains, but the way of the wicked he thwarts.

The LORD shall reign forever; your God, O Zion, through all generations.

R. Lord, come and save us.

Reading II Jas 5:7-10

Be patient, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You too must be patient. Make your hearts firm, because the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not complain, brothers and sisters, about one another, that you may not be judged. Behold, the Judge is standing before the gates. Take as an example of hardship and patience, brothers and sisters, the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Gospel Mt 11:2-11

When John the Baptist heard in prison of the works of the Christ, he sent his disciples to Jesus with this question, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" Jesus said to them in reply, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."

As they were going off, 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 clothing? Those who wear fine clothing are in royal palaces. Then why did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way before you. Amen, I say to you, among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

“Is Jesus the one who is to come, or should we look for another?”

About 18 years ago my wife Pat and I were in San Francisco with our two sons and their wives. Early on Christmas morning we were walking to Mission Dolores Basilica, when I noticed lying on the sidewalk next to a homeless person bundled up in their cardboard box and blankets, was a new pair of Thorlo socks. My son Christopher explained that some people in the neighborhood give the street people these gifts every Christmas. That small gesture of giving a pair of socks in my mind is a perfect example of the light of Christ shining in this world. A few years later we were back in San Francisco to be with our family...but, that year was extra special...I had the privilege of Baptizing my 1st grandchild, Damiano (can you tell his mama is Italian?) Then 3 years later I Baptized my 2nd grandson, Amedeo. Claiming Damiano and Amedeo for Jesus and joyfully welcoming them into the body of Christ were amazing blessings, especially because we used the 250-year-old font in the Mission Delores old Mission chapel. Imagine the thousands who were baptized in that place! I dearly love the Sacrament of Baptism because it truly shines the light of Christ into the world ever more brightly. Well, we were convinced that 2 grandchildren were it...no more to come. But then, 6 years ago a little girl named Phoebe was born into our lives. Now we are experiencing the light of Christ again! And, that brightness of God's glory is what we anticipate and celebrate today on Advent's Third Sunday, Gaudete Sunday.

The scriptures today tell us that God loves us so much that He sent many prophets over the centuries to clearly tell us that the glory of God is coming into our lives. Like Isaiah, of the 1st reading, who lived over 700 years before Jesus and who's name means “Yahweh is salvation.” Isaiah told us the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be cleared when we see the glory of God. But in the Gospel, the final and greatest prophet John the Baptist's image of the Messiah of being a stern judge executing fiery judgement on sinners was challenged. When John hears of Jesus' attitude towards sinners, especially his eating with sinners, he begins to wonder if Jesus is really the One. He wonders if he should look elsewhere. This was a huge faith crisis

for John. So, he asked his disciples to respond to a question of faith: *“Is Jesus the one who is to come, or should we look for another?”*

In response to John’s question, Jesus does not give a straight answer but points to what is happening through His life: *“the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.”* Note that He does not directly say that *He* heals them. Rather Jesus affirms that his miracles are works of God happening through him. The miracles of Jesus are signs...bright signs for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear...we must ask, are we the blind and the deaf? We have to work this out for ourselves...like St. John the Baptist and his disciples, each of us has to make a decision of faith: *“Is Jesus the one who is to come, or should we look for another?”*

On this Gaudete Sunday let us rejoice that we are Christians, because it is through this community that God gives us that gift of faith and that we share in the gift of Christ in our lives. We know that Jesus is present here to transform our broken and sin-filled lives... Jesus is here today with us on this altar in His body and blood...He is here today in the Word of God we heard...and never forget, He is here in each of us...our community is living in His kingdom as the Body of Christ serving God and our fellow man.

As I look out over this sanctuary, I know that each of us will be sharing the light of Christ once or twice, or even ten times a day. Because of our community, I know that hundreds of people, maybe thousands even, will receive the light of Christ every day. You see, I understand because I saw a pair of socks next to a homeless person. And I have no doubt that we experienced the light of Christ when Damiano and Amedeo and Phoebe were born. And, I understand that through us, even though our gestures are small, the glory of God does come to replace the darkness of the world.

And, that my friends is something to celebrate this Sunday!!

Amen, Alleluia!