

### • 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Advent (C)

- As we approach Christmas, we experience an incessant & increasingly intensive attack from all quarters to buy gifts.
- Our gift from God is the person of Jesus, & we exchange presents to remind us of this greatest of gifts - What would we do...who would you & I today be if we hadn't been gifted by God with Jesus?
- This Sunday's Gospel once more presents John the Baptist who has a particular place of honour in our tradition.
- He was the cousin of Jesus who leapt for joy in his mother's womb when Elizabeth received a visit from Mary.
- He was the one who lived as a radical prophet, wearing animal skins & eating locusts & demanding a radical change in the way people lived.
- Our generation likes to close an eye to that aspect of John's life, because he's a bit embarrassing, but it is this aspect, this demand for continual & radical change, that fascinated people over the centuries.
- In today's Gospel the people gather around John & ask, "What is it that we should do?" - Not what should others do to prepare for the Kingdom.
- Not how should the government change to prepare for the Kingdom.
- Not how should the Temple worship change to prepare for the Kingdom, but, simply & perhaps more difficult, what shall we do?
- John told the people to be charitable; that they should give the poor of their surplus; the tax collectors are told to be honest, not using their position to enrich themselves; soldiers are told to stop harassing & intimidating people.
- John the Baptist challenged the people to love. He also challenges us.
- He challenges us to adopt a whole new attitude in life, an attitude of sacrificial love.
- This is the love that others will witness in us as a sign that the Kingdom of God is near.
- Paul put it this way to the Philippians. "Let your gentleness be known to everyone, for the Lord is near."
- What is it we should do to prepare for the coming of Christ?
- The first thing we should do is to look at how we treat other people & then make & effort to be kind, considerate & loving.
- John the Baptist was a radical.
- He called people to make a radical change in their lives.
- Sometimes we let the sentimentality of Christmas get in the way of the call of the prophet. Christmas is about a radical change in the world & a radical change in ourselves – to be life-giving & not sapping the life out of others.
- And it is in being life-giving that we find joy & wherein we find Christ.
- Jesus is not hiding from us. It is we who are hiding from him.
- Did you notice that our Scripture readings for this 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent are about joy?

- As people who bear Jesus' name we have every reason to have a deep joy, a deep joy that is always there even when sometimes the circumstances of our life can cause a deep sadness. Quite a paradox!
- So how do we attain this deep inner joy?
- Three times in today's Gospel we heard the question "What must we do?"
- The answers John the Baptist gave to those who asked him what they must do were all about the way they treated other people?
- That is an essential part of Jesus Gospel.
- I read an article last week that said the people of the Catholic Church today lack passion. Do you agree?
- Are we not passionate about Jesus, about his family the Church, about the values of the Gospel for daily life?
- If not, then what must we do to be passionate?
- As we are people of expectation, people of joy at God's loving gift of Jesus, in our time of prayer let's be there with the others with John the Baptist.
- Let's ask, "What must we do?", & let's prayerfully listen to the answer.