

16<sup>th</sup> December 2018 (Third Sunday in Advent, Year C)

Zephaniah 3:14-18; Isaiah 12; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:10-18.

### **Be happy, .... The Lord is very near!**

As we get closer to the great feast of the Incarnation, the Word of God who becomes human like each one of us, Paul invites us to be happy in the Lord. The coming of the Lord, God's presence amongst us and in our life, is a reason of great joy and celebration.

Since the beginning of Advent, two weeks ago, we have been preparing to welcome God in our midst. On the first Sunday in Advent, Jesus invited us to stand erect with our heads held high, happy in the knowledge that our salvation was near at hand! Last week we heard John the Baptist invite us to be prepared for the coming of the Lord. In today's gospel John responds to the question that will naturally arise in our hearts: how to prepare for the coming of the Lord? What does the coming of the Lord mean in our life?

John invites the people around him to be open and responsive towards their sisters and brothers. One way of meeting Jesus in our own life is in those we encounter every day. We do not need to go far in order to meet Jesus, he is there, in our life, every day. John tells those around him to share with those who are less fortunate, to be kind and tolerant, not to steal from one another and not to be intimidating. People who accepted John's message and were ready to try to live this new way of life, were immersed in water as a visible sign of their commitment.

From our personal experience we know how difficult it is to be always mindful of God in our midst and of the needs of our sisters and brothers. We start off with loads of good intentions, but we soon find ourselves slipping back into old habits, putting our own needs before those of others around us. God knows what we are made of! God understands our good intentions and acknowledges our weaknesses. Yet he is still happy to come and share his life with us and invites us to wait for his coming full of hope, with our heads held high!

Salvation is not something we can achieve on our own. No amount of good works will pay for the bridge, linking us to God, to be constructed. It takes God to become human and die on the cross to reconcile us. In our human state we cannot achieve reconciliation; the only thing we can do is to continuously destroy our relationship with God through our sinful choices.

John the Baptist tells us that Jesus is good news! Although on our own we can never achieve our salvation, we need not despair. All we need to do is to continue growing grain in the small patch of ground that is our life. The image of the threshing floor is an interesting one. The wheat and the chaff are one and the same plant; indeed one cannot get to the wheat without the chaff! We are the grain; as we prepare to meet the Lord in our daily life, our job is to make sure our grain is growing strong. We need to protect our grain from useless dangers and make sure it is well watered. When the Lord comes, it is his job to clear the threshing floor, separating our wheat from our chaff so that we can indeed stand proudly in his presence. The chaff in our life is useless and can only be thrown away, it has done its job in helping us grow and protect our wheat so that we can offer a good crop to go into the barn. (The image of the chaff being burnt by fire need not alarm or scare us!)

As we continue with our preparation for the Lord's coming this Christmas and in our daily life, and as we prepare to meet him face to face at the end of our time here on earth, let us continue to wash ourselves in preparation for his coming. Let us be happy because the Lord is near. Let us stand erect and proud with our heads held high, for we know that we are indeed saved!

Fr Mario