

“The Greatest Anticipation”

In last week’s Gospel, John the Baptist tells us, that the forgiving power of God comes to us when we confess and repent of our sins. In today’s Gospel reading, John the Baptist set up for us the greatest anticipation of all time of the awaited Messiah, who is the Word of life, and the light of the world.

The Church today wants us to be joyful because we are getting close to the joyful celebration of our Lord’s birth, so there is joy in the air. That is why this rose vestment today and the lighting of the rose candle. Do not let your eyes deceive you, they are rose colored and not pink.

In our first reading, we heard of a people who had been in exile and in slavery in Babylon for about 50 years. God used Cyrus king of Persia to free them from their captors the Babylonians. Even though they would be going home to rebuild their homes, cities, and temple that had been destroyed by the Babylonians, Prophet Isaiah rejoiced heartily in what God had done for them. We too are called to rejoice and thank God for what He is doing in our lives.

Our responsorial Psalm comes from Mary’s response to Elizabeth on her visit. Even though at this point, Mary was probably apprehensive about what her future husband would do. Was he about to break off their engagement and leave her disgraced and probably be stoned to death for being pregnant without being married? Despite all these going on in her life, we hear her in humility give glory to God for what He has done for her.

Likewise, Paul in our second reading wrote to the Thessalonians telling them to “Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.” Paul wrote this, despite all he suffered in his litany of suffering in second letter to the Corinthians. He said, he was beaten 3 times with rods, stoned and left for death, jailed, faced angry mob, gone without food, or water, or sleep, shipwrecked three times, even was in danger in the hands of fellow Christians, among others.

What Paul is telling us is, no matter the circumstance we are in, as Christians, we should rejoice because it is God’s will that we rejoice. He wants us to choose through faith in God, joy over self-pity. Paul want us to remember what Hagar said when she was pregnant with Ishmael and ran away from Abraham’s home because of Sarai’s mistreatment, “**You are God who sees me**” (Gen 16:13). God sees us in all our afflictions and troubles and He is our God who delivers joy into our hearts. He is our God who will turn our mourning into dancing if we have faith in Him.

In the Gospel again we are given a message of joy because, as John the evangelist tells us, there are four days of preparation before Jesus the creator of life who has come to bring light into our world is revealed. In all, there are four days during which John the Baptist revealed to us who is the Messiah.

Day one is from John 1:19-28 in our reading today when John the Baptist points away from himself and says, “**There is one among you whom you do not recognize.**” *Day Two* is when in verses 29-34, John the Baptist witnesses to Jesus as the Lamb of God and the Son of God. *Day Three* is when some of the disciples of John left him to follow Jesus and Simon is told he would

be called Peter in verses 35:42 and *Day Four* is the final day of preparation a day that Jesus calls Phillip and reveals Himself to Nathaniel and other Disciples as the Messiah in verses 43-51.

What John the evangelist has done is to make a connection to God's gift of His Law to His people on Mount Sinai. God told Moses after the Jews promised to do all that God had commanded them (First Day). God told Moses "**Go to the people and have them sanctify themselves today and tomorrow... and be ready for the third day; for on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people**" (Exod. 19:10-11). This shows the continuity of God's plan, Law, Prophets and the Messiah.

God's plan for us is beyond wonderful, and His light, love, mercy, and forgiveness beyond our wildest dreams. If we could experience them fully, we will have heaven on earth. But for now, most of us have to live by faith and hope in the expectation of His kingdom. He has sent His Son into the world to lead us to Him. So like the people we heard about in our readings today, we are full of joy in expectation of Him who is our Savior.

As we come to receive Him, let us think of someone who is hurting or alone who we can visit or write to so we can reflect Jesus' light to our neighbor.