



CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation

December 14, 2014 Third Sunday of Advent

Gospel reading John 1:6-8, 19-28 [*To be read aloud*]

A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light. And this is the testimony of John. When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to him to ask him, “Who are you?” He admitted and did not deny it, but admitted, “I am not the Christ.” So they asked him, “What are you then? Are you Elijah?” And he said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” He answered, “No.” So they said to him, “Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us?

What do you have to say for yourself?” He said: “I am *the voice of one crying out in the desert, ‘make straight the way of the Lord,’*” as Isaiah the prophet said.” Some Pharisees were also sent. They asked him, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?” John answered them, “I baptize with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie.” This happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Brief commentary:

Today, the third Sunday of Advent, is known as *Gaudete* (Joy/Rejoice) Sunday. Unique to this feast is the rose color, such as the rose vestments worn by priests, as well as the rose colored candle of the Advent wreath. This feast heralds the immediacy of the Nativity of the Lord. The nearness of his coming fills us with ever greater joy and rejoicing, just as the light of the Advent wreath continues to increase, dispelling gloom and sadness. The first reading from Isaiah calls us to “rejoice heartedly.” Today’s psalm is taken from Mary’s canticle in Luke where she exclaims exuberantly, “My soul rejoices in God my savior.” And Paul calls the community at Thessalonica to “rejoice always.” Paul’s blessing is likewise fitting for this third Sunday: “May the God of peace make you perfectly holy, and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will also accomplish it.” Like John the Baptist, the Christian is one who “testifies to the light...so that all may believe” through their testimony and witness of life. The Christian, like John, is also one who is not afraid to announce the good news despite opposition, misunderstanding, criticism, and rejection. The Christian at times is one who – like John – cries out in the wilderness of secularism and unbelief, of materialism and consumerism, of religious indifference and moral corruption, of frivolous distractions and false values, where the spiritually dry ground and morally parched earth of society finds it difficult to produce people open and receptive to God’s Word, people who seek God’s revelation and are ready to respond decisively and fruitfully to it. Yet, this world, with all its promises of happiness and wealth, fame and power, pleasure and love, is incapable of truly fulfilling the deepest yearnings of the human soul. Christians must therefore be evangelizers of hope in the midst of the hidden despair that is materialism, be agents of healing and reconciliation in their families and communities, work to bring about more equitable and just social structures, and through their professions and societal involvement help improve the lives of people in practical concrete ways. This Advent season Christians must, both rejoice *and* be agents of joy, be hopeful *and* bring hope, respond to God’s transforming grace *and* be apostles of that transforming grace in the world. In this way we will prepare the way of the Lord in society and in the hearts of people.

Today’s reading offers significant messages:

- *Gaudete* Sunday invites us to rejoice because Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the savior and redeemer, is drawing ever closer. He will establish God’s kingship and “make justice and praise spring up before all the nations.”
- The prophetic figure of John the Baptist inspires Christians to likewise be precursors of Christ’s mission and action in the world, by making ready the hearts of people and the conditions in society for the transforming and life-giving grace of God.
- Christians are to be both beneficiaries of God’s grace *and* agents of that grace by both experiencing the joy and hope, faith and love that God’s grace fills them with, and – like John – be prophets and apostles of that joy and hope, faith and love.

For our shared or personal reflection:

After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.

- Am I rejoicing, despite all circumstances, in the faith that Christ’s kinship prevails over all sorrow, all opposition, and all difficulties?
- How am I living as a precursor of the Messiah? How am I inviting people to open their hearts to the Good News of God’s saving love in Jesus Christ?
- How am I *both* a beneficiary of God’s grace *and* an agent of that grace in the world?

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 522-24