

Homily. 3rd Sunday in Advent. Year.A. 14/15 December 2019.

In my Pastor's Pen you can read for yourselves what I've written about the destructive power of gossip, so I won't further belabour this in my homily. Suffice it to say that a person or persons unnamed had taken stories about Jesus to John, locked up as he was in King Herod's prison dark. These stories had sown some doubt in John's mind about Jesus, and if He was the One, long awaited, or not?

Granted his dire circumstances John did the right thing in sending his own trusted followers to ask Jesus directly if he was the One who was to come, or had they to wait for someone else? As we've heard in Jesus reply He pointed to the evidence of what He was doing, evidence that aligned perfectly with the scriptures and with God's promises given in the 1st Reading from the prophet Isaiah. He was healing, liberating, making people whole and freeing them even from death, just as God willed. The message relayed back to John was that Jesus was indeed the One, and happy the person who does not lose faith in Him.

We can be certain that John got this message of encouragement and light because he continued to witness to God's truth even to the point of martyrdom. As Jesus said, John was no reed that swayed in the breeze of current opinion or convenience, nor was he rich and under the influence of the idols of prestige and power. He was a prophet, a spokesperson for God on this earth and in his time, and he was the greatest of them all.

Did you hear though what Jesus added at the end of His speech? He said that the least in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than John. These words are meant for you and for me, for us today. Only people of faith who don't lose their hope can grasp this greatness, born as it is of patience and loving service for others in the example and the Spirit of the Lord. Only people who let the Lord come into their lives, welcoming His arrival can be healed, made whole and enabled to serve others by handing on the Good-News through their deeds and words.

If we're about the business of letting Jesus save us, co-operating with the continual work of God's mercy and grace towards us, then we've become energised in God's Spirit, chosen to extend to others the same mercy and grace as we've received. We're on our way to becoming prophets of the Lord's truth, joy and peace to our brothers and sisters, not gossips and story tellers who only ever create more heat and disharmony.

In 10 days it'll be Christmas, our nativity feast of hope, the birth of Emmanuel, God-with-us. As I've said to you over these few weeks our final Advent days, so easily filled up with demands and distractions, are not without their challenges to our faith and patience. Yet, the grace of God for us lies within this time, the vision of faith to see Jesus coming in all that we do and in everyone we meet. John's eyes darkened in prison were, like the eyes of the blind, opened to the truth and light of Jesus, the One long awaited. As Jesus the 'eye opener' worked in those days, so He is working amongst us now, for we long to see His face and be saved. Let's ensure we do all that we're able so as not to miss his arrival.