

Homily. 3rd Sunday in Advent. Year. C. 14/15 December 2024.

As with last weekend, so, too, this 3rd Advent Sunday focuses on Jesus with us, in our midst even now but often unrecognised by many. The Baptist made it clear that he wasn't the long awaited Messiah-Christ. He turned our attention to the One who was emerging. John stressed justice as a prerequisite for opening the eyes of our minds and hearts to the Lord's presence and action. Acting justly, living fairly and equitably and pursuing what is just and respectful, these are essential to our Christian lives as they ever were to the conversion that John preached and offered.

People say that they can't find God, the Jesus isn't real to them, that we believe in fairy tales. I ask them if they are living in just ways, if they value what is right and fair and if they are trying their best to treat all people, without any exceptions, respectfully as sisters and brothers? The God of justice, a kindly but exact justice, will not be found, seen or felt if we're set on paths that put the self first, on greedy ways, caring foremost about our place and position in the world, and damn the cost to everyone else.

This is why reconciliation matters, acknowledging that we've got things wrong, that our values and perspectives have come out of alignment, that we're ripe for renewal, primed for a fresh conversion to God's ways and into the image of Christ. If something like this happens during these Advent days then it will be a very good indeed for us, a true time of grace.

Of note this Sunday, both the 1st and 2nd readings speak to us of joy, happiness and freedom from anxiety. These sentiments aren't airy-fairy or dream-like fingers crossed wishes. They are real possibilities, gifts for us

if we can awake to the nearness of the Lord. His loving, forgiving and caring presence gives us confidence to cast off our anxieties and let rejoicing take us over. Our faith is in Jesus; one who is like us, given for our good; this creates hope. It follows, then, that hope frees us from our fears letting us be happy in all things and places, for we aren't alone, nor are we unsafe, having a Saviour beside us. Our Rose pink candle points us to this joyful hope as we keep traveling together this Advent.

To tap into this experience of hope and joy, taking notice of the Baptist's call to conversion and just living becomes more pressing, more essential. As I said earlier, so, too, must our desire to be reconciled to God and others. In this cause we have the Sacrament of Penance, our prayers of sorrow and contrition for our sins and failures and our Eucharist which is our communion with God and each other, celebrated, received, shared and lived out day after day. For now, in this moment, we do what the Psalm said: We cry out with joy and gladness for among us is the great and Holy One, our saviour. It is his face that we long to see; his presence with us that we want to feel, know and share, our Good News made flesh, for us and for the life of the world.