

Homily. 3rd Sunday in Advent. Year. C. 10/11 December 2022.

Joy is a very different thing from happiness which is a fleeting feeling. We can be happy about some success, about a gift we've received or our team's win in a game or about a nice day. Our happiness is real, but lasts only for a while fading quickly when our next challenge or difficulty arises.

This Sunday is all about joy, a richer more enduring experience. John was joyful even in King Herod's dark dungeon. His consoling joy came from living with integrity and from fearlessly speaking God's truth to power. That he should suffer for having done so was unjust, but far from unexpected. His faith in Jesus as the long awaited Christ, the One who was to come, gave him hope. John's hope showed itself in his love for God and for the well being of Gods people. The fruit of his loving service was deep joy, something no King or prison could take away from him.

Cut off from society as he was, John sought information from Jesus about what he was doing, proving that he was the Christ. Jesus reply to John's messengers pointed directly to the works and words expected of God's chosen One; the blind received sight, the lame walked, lepers were made clean and healed, the deaf heard, the dead were raised up and the poor received God's good news of loving salvation. These works, signs of the Messiah, were the ones foretold by God's prophets such as Isaiah. Being confirmed in his faith and strengthened in his joy John continued to give witness, even to the point of his terrible death at King Herod's hands.

Happiness, worthy of our aspirations as it may be, can never truly comfort nor satisfy us for it leaves us only wanting more. On the other hand joy,

absolutely essential for human living, sticks around despite any and all discomforts and difficulties. This is because lasting joy is built on truth and on serving others, not on getting what we want and pleasing ourselves.

I trust that in 2 weeks time we'll all be here again, celebrating the birth of our Lord, rejoicing in the gift of his entire self to us and to all who come come alive in faith to him. Our Christmas joy emerges from his generosity, his close friendship with and total love for us. It's then with the patience of which St. Paul spoke in the 2nd reading and the faith and courage of John the Baptist living in us that we are determined to make use of these remaining precious Advent days by helping each other. In this way the unfailing joy of the Lord will fill or hearts every day, come what may.