Third Sunday of Advent (B)

Gospel text (*Jn* 1:6-8.19-28): 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 Messiah." 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 Messiah 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.

"There is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me"

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Today, in the midst of Advent, we receive an invitation to joy and hope: "Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus" (1Thes 5:16-17). The Lord is near: "My daughter, know your heart is Heaven for Me", Jesus tells Saint Faustina Kowalska (and certainly, the Lord would like to repeat this to each of His children). It is a good time to think about all that He has done for us and give thanks to Him for it.

Joy is an essential characteristic of Faith. To feel loved and saved by God is a great joy; to know that we are brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, who gave His life for us, is the main reason for Christian joy. A Christian given over to sadness will have a weak spiritual life, will fail to see all that God has done for him or her, and therefore, will be unable to transmit it to others. Christian joy springs from gratitude,

especially for the love that the Lord shows us; we do so in communion with Christ, every Sunday, through the Eucharist.

The Gospel has presented us with the figure of John the Baptist, the precursor. John enjoyed great popularity among the simple people; but when asked, he responds with humility: "I am not the Messiah..." (cf. Jn 1:21); “I baptize with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me” (Jn 1:26-27). Jesus Christ is the long-awaited Messiah; He is the Light of the world. The Gospel is not a strange message nor one doctrine among many, but the Good News that gives meaning to all human life because it has been communicated to us by God Himself who became man. Every Christian is called to acknowledge Jesus Christ and to bear witness to his or her Faith. As Christ's disciples, we are called to bring the gift of light. Beyond those words, the best testimony, is and will always be the example of a faithful life.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Because it is hard to distinguish word from voice, even John himself was thought to be the Christ. The voice was thought to be the word. But the voice acknowledged what it was, anxious not to give offence to the word. I am not the Christ, he said, nor Elijah, nor the prophet.” (St Augustine)

- “In order to have this joy in preparation for Christmas, first, pray. Second: give thanks to the Lord. Third, think of how we can go to others, to bring a little unction, peace, joy. This is the joy of the Christian.” (Francis)

- “After agreeing to baptize him along with the sinners, John the Baptist looked at Jesus and pointed him out as the ‘Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world’ (Jn 1:29). By doing so, he reveals that Jesus is at the same time the suffering Servant who silently allows himself to be led to the slaughter (Is 53:7) and who bears the sin of the multitudes, and also the Paschal Lamb, the symbol of Israel's redemption at the first Passover (Ex 12:3-14) Christ's whole life expresses his mission: ‘to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’ (Mk 10:45).” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, № 608)