

## Third Sunday of Advent

**Homily based on Is 61:1-2a, 10-11, 1 Thes 5:16-24 and Jn 1:6-8, 19-28**

**“Marching forward with faith and love, through the valleys and mountains and wilderness and oasis, preparing for the Coming of Jesus!**

Advent is also a time of waiting. Waiting for the coming of the Lord. But waiting is always quite boring...right? I remember last time I traveled from Columbus to Texas. Father dropped me at the airport little early and the flight was supposed to be by 5 pm. But after sometimes heard the announcement, the flight will be delayed for one hour. Again, after one hour the announcement repeated saying it will be delayed for another one hour. And it continued and finally we got flight in the late at night. It was such a boring time waiting, but the announcements in-between gave some hope and joy. Today we celebrate “Gaudete Sunday” (“Joyful Sunday”), is an announcement or a reminder in the Advent that Christmas is near. The more you prepare and wait the more Joy of Christmas you receive.

There is a story of a youngster who was laid-off after the company decided to part ways with him. Despite having good performances, the young man fell culprit at the hands of jealous workmates and nepotistic influences. However, nothing deterred this young Christian. On being asked how he felt at this unjust treatment, he coolly replied: People can make any number of accusations. People can put me down as much as they want. But I know who I am!” And he added, “Every day I look to the Lord and inspired by St Francis de Sales, I tell Him, ‘Lord, I belong to You, and to You alone!’”

Dear friends, when we have a deep conviction that our being draws it’s origin and strength from the Lord, we are able to live with conviction and joy.

The Gospel of the day is the amazing presentation of John the Baptist, who lived with much conviction and passion. The Gospel is an introduction to the person of John the Baptist. An attempt is made to “know more” about John, His name, His occupations, His interests and liking.

The Fourth Gospel introduces St John the Baptist as a person of great enthusiasm of passionate zeal and of a fighting spirit. Some Priests and Levites came to him to ask, “Who are you” (Jn 1: 19). John the Baptist was quite clear and convinced of the answer to this question. He admitted that he was not the Messiah. (Jn 1: 20). He admitted that he was not Elijah. (Jn 1: 21). He admitted that he was not the Prophet. (Jn 1: 21).

He testified that he was the voice crying in the desert. (Jn 1: 23). He testified that he was the one exhorting to ‘make straight the way of the Lord’. (Jn 1:23). He testified that he was the witness to the Light that was coming to enlighten the world (Jn1: 8). He testified that the One coming after him was ranking ahead of him (Jn 1: 15). A deep conviction of “who he was” guided all the actions of John the Baptist.

Dear friends, today we need to ask ourselves, “Do I possess such kind of a deep and “anchored” conviction in my Christian Life?” John the Baptist was questioned, “Who are you” by many people. He had an answer for it, and that made Him not to waver or get bogged down by situations.

Life often throws this question to us – “Who are you?” When we face emotional crisis in our relationships and social interactions, we are encountered with this question, deep within us... “Who are you?”

When things in life do not go the way we wished or expected and somehow the future appears bleak, we are encountered with this question, deep within us... “Who are you?”

When in the castle of interiority, we experience a barrenness and a feeling of isolation from the Lord, we are encountered with this question, deep within us... “Who are you?”

Failing to find an answer to this question, can sometimes.... plunge us into a deep struggle... make us to fear life and people... crush our hopes and aspirations. We may tend to think... “What really is the purpose of my life?” “Why should I continue to life in this manner?” “I wish I could just be free from all this web of pain and tensions!” Yes, life will at many times, throw this question at us – “Who are you?”

Today, St John the Baptist, exhorts and challenges us, to not get too disturbed when we are faced with this provoking question in life. Our faith and strength, like St John the Baptist, ought to be Jesus, the Light. Our hope and courage, like St John the Baptist, ought to be Jesus, the Messiah.

I am God’s Child....in this is my true identity. I am the witness to the True Light... in this is my true role in life. I am a Voice in the wilderness... in this is my Christian duty and obligation. I am dependent on the Grace and Mercy of the Lord... in this is my authentic hope and faith.

With Isaiah, the Prophet, let us echo: “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness...” (Isa 61:10). And with St Paul, let us also exult, as he exhorts us: “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks

in all circumstances... for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit!” (1 Thess 5:16-19).

Dear friends, on this Gaudete Sunday (“Joyful Sunday”), may St. John the Baptist, whom we have come to “know more” today, become an inspiration and a challenge, as we march forward...with faith and love...through the valleys and mountains ... and wilderness and oasis... through these days of the Season of Advent, preparing for the Coming of Jesus!

As the words of that beautiful hymn goes...“WHO AM I?”... I AM YOURS!