

Friday was a day for Nationwide celebrations throughout Syria in honor of the victory of the revolution that toppled the Assad Regime. For a week Jubilant crowds have gathered throughout Syria as the Interim Prime Minister promises amnesty, judicial reforms, freedom of movement, protection of civil rights, and a release of all the captive political prisoners. The streets of Lebanon were also alive with celebration. Church bells rang out as Lebanese Christians gathered in great numbers. Flags waved triumphantly, fireworks filled the sky, the Christians are rejoicing over the end of an oppressive government that cast a long shadow over its neighbor Lebanon. The blood of many martyrs has finely born the fruit of justice.ⁱ “Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice!” (Phil 4:4).

This past week also brought news of a miracle in Lourdes that happened a century ago. John Traynor served in the British Royal Navy during the first World War. The wounds he sustained in battle left him paralyzed and he regularly suffered from epileptic attacks. Traynor was slated to be admitted to a hospital permanently. Instead, against the advice of everyone who cared for him, he traveled to Lourdes with an unwavering faith because he believed all things are possible with the help of God. He bathed in the healing waters of Lourdes over a period of days. On the second day, the violent epileptic fits stopped ... never to return. The next day, Traynor went again to the baths — while he was bathing, he recalled his legs becoming “violently agitated” and feeling as though he had regained use of them. He wanted to participate in a Eucharistic procession. When the archbishop passed by him with the Blessed Sacrament, Traynor’s arm also became “violently agitated.” He broke through his bandages and made the sign of the cross for the first time in eight years. 3 Doctors examined him and found he had regained his ability to walk perfectly, as well as full use and function of his right arm and legs. The sores on his body healed completely and the epileptic fits never returned. One of the official reports issued by the Medical Bureau at Lourdes states that Traynor’s “extraordinary cure is absolutely beyond and above the powers of nature.”ⁱⁱ “Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice!”

Advent is the season of preparing for the second coming of the Lord as we remember and rejoice in his first coming. 2,000 years ago, Jesus came to bring salvation to humanity. The eyes of the blind were opened, the ears of the deaf were able to hear, the lame were miraculously cured to not only walk but to jump for joy. And the tongues of the mute began to sing glorious melodies.ⁱⁱⁱ “Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel. Give thanks to the LORD, acclaim his name; among the nations make known his deeds, proclaim how exalted is his name” (Is 12:6, 4).

It is important to look beyond the miracles of the day. Jesus promises eternal salvation. “He will bring back those he has ransomed and give them everlasting joy, from which sorrow and mourning will flee.”^{iv} Jesus frees of from our sins and leads us to a new promised land where all of our infirmities will disappear, and we will be reunited with all of the loved ones we have shed tears over.

As we look forward to his second coming at the end of time, the ultimate Advent, we rejoice at the good things to come as foretold in the Book of Revelation. “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, God’s dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and

there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, [for] the old order has passed away” (Rev 21:1-4). “Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice!”

ⁱ Articles from Crux and Catholic News Agency. See catholicnewsagency.com/news/260963/lebanese-christians-celebrate-assads-fall-seeing-it-as-justice-for-years-of-oppression

ⁱⁱ catholicnewsagency.com/news/260945/healing-at-lourdes-of-british-world-war-i-soldier-declared-miraculous

ⁱⁱⁱ nregister.com/blog/gaudete-sunday-11-things-to-know-and-share-hkv4lt3d

^{iv} Ibid