

Advent 3rd Sunday (*Gaudete Sunday*) "Rejoice, I tell you rejoice"

Joy to the world; the Lord is near!

On the third Sunday of the Advent, called "Gaudete Sunday", the Church calls us to rejoice. We hear this call throughout the readings today. Prophet Zephaniah, in the first reading says: "Shout for joy, o daughter of Sion, sing joyful, be glad and exult."

Today's Psalms exhort us: Cry out with joy and gladness, among you is the holy one of God. St. Paul tells the Philippians: Rejoice in the Lord, always, and again I tell you, rejoice.

Why should we rejoice? What does it mean 'to rejoice in the Lord'? It's rejoicing, that comes from thinking, the hope that the Lord is near. It's the result of a life lived in peace and consistency.

No one passes this world without carrying the burden of the mission he alone is called to accomplish. Yet, there are only some who realize their true mission and peacefully accomplish it. John (JB) was one of them.

He was convinced of four things: "Who am I? Who am I not? What is my mission? What is the purpose of my mission?"

The clear understanding of these four factors is what makes John, a person sent by God. In fact, which person is here on earth, not being sent by God? Not having a clear conviction about these our factors is what makes us persons, 'not being sent by God', and prompts us to think that I have come for myself.

The one who does not know who he is, and who he is not, his life will be an attempt to become 'someone'. He who does not know his mission and its purpose, will fail to discern what is right or wrong, and will live in continuous agitation. This will eventually lead him to do

things that are not appropriate and avoid doing what is essential and unavoidable.

John the Baptist was at peace with himself, because he had the satisfaction of walking the way he was asked to. He had no complaints, and no anger towards anyone. Even when he was a prisoner of king Herod, he never needed to rethink what he said or did. Because his self-awareness of who he is, and conviction about his mission helped him to discern the right and wrong of his doings, and that lead him to live in peace.

John didn't fall into the temptation of becoming what he is not, when others attributed various titles to him. He was very aware that he is only 'the voice' and not 'the Word'; that he came 'to prepare the way' and he was not 'the Way'; that he will baptize 'with water' and not 'with fire'. He just was happy to be the one 'pointing to Jesus' the lamb of God, the Messiah.

Friends, one of the most painful experiences a person can have in life is to live by being continuously accused by one's own conscience. The ignorance of what one needs to do can squeeze a person's life between right and wrong. But, if your heart is at peace with yourself, you need not worry about whatever others may say about you or find fault with you.

We can easily become prey to what others want to make of us, what we are not. Our temptation is to become what we are not called to be. Like John, you can live in peace and truly rejoice at the Lord's coming, if you are clear of who you are, what you are not, and what is your mission.

Therefore, let us pray to have peace at heart and rejoice in the Lord, knowing that peace is the share of the one who places his trust in God. God alone. Amen