

'JOY'

3rd SUNDAY OF ADVENT - HOMILY – 11 DECEMBER 2016

CREATION

St Francis of Assisi found such joy in creation.

He was in tune with creation rejoicing in God.

St Francis of Assisi could identify with the First Reading today from Isaiah.

Isaiah said in chapter 35,

*“Let the wilderness and the dry lands exult,
Let the wasteland rejoice and bloom.
Let it bring forth flowers like jonquil,
Let it rejoice and sing for joy.”*

The joy of creation responding to the Creator.

PEOPLE

Isaiah also highlights the joy of God's healing:

*“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
The ears of the deaf unsealed,
Then the lame shall leap like a deer
And the tongues of the dumb sing for joy”.*

This joy celebrates the return from bondage.

We live this joy in God as we let go of what imprisons and enslaves us.

The joy of God liberating us

From our self-doubts,

From our enslavement to greed and prestige and

From a thirst for power over others.

PATIENCE

Inspired by the patience of the farmer,

the Second Reading of St James inspires us to wait for the spring rains.

It is not grumbling and bickering.

It is not an attitude of 'I must have everything now'.

It is not an attitude of 'Life is all about me'.

It is an openness to the love of God all around us.

An openness to growth.

GOSPEL

The Gospel today Matthew 11:2-11 sets the scene.

John the Baptist is in prison.

He has heard of what Jesus is doing.

He sends his disciples to see if Jesus is the Messiah.

We know that thought pattern.

We try to do the right thing, **YET IS IT REALLY WHAT GOD IS ASKING?**

HAVE WE GOT IT RIGHT?

John can't get out of prison but he doesn't use that as an excuse.

He asks his disciples to ask.

HOW DO WE ASK OTHERS ABOUT WHAT JESUS IS DOING IN OUR LIVES?

John's disciples see and hear about the ministry of Jesus in healing and liberating love.

Jesus says to them,

***“Go and tell John what you see and hear:
The blind receive their sight,
The lame walk, the lepers are cleansed,
The deaf hear, the dead are raised,
And the poor have good news brought to them.
And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.”***

ARE WE BLESSED THIS CHRISTMAS?

DO WE OPEN OUR EYES AND EARS TO SEE AND HEAR GOD AT WORK AMONG US?

WHO IS IN NEED?

DO WE HAVE TIME TO BE THERE FOR THEM?

HOW DO WE LIVE OUT THE HEALING AND LIBERATING LOVE OF GOD IN OUR LIVES?

John’s ministry is so important yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. Not just a servant of God, but a humble servant of God is our goal.

In Matthew 11:10 the NRSV translation says,

*“See I am sending my messenger ahead of me,
Who will prepare your way before you.”*

These English words *“ahead of me”* are translating the Greek *“pro prosopou sou.”* Literally it is *“before (the) face of you”*.

Certainly more personal that God’s messenger is before your face.

Close and intimate.

Our ministry is before the face of others.

Such a ministry is about love.

About being present to them. About accompanying them.

And within us, living joyfully, the presence of God.

Now let us listen to the stories of our parish members who went up to visit our sister parish of Blackall/Tambo recently.

They went in solidarity, and like John’s disciples they come back to share what they saw and heard. They joined in the pre-Christmas Fete.

Let us hear about the way of life in Blackall/Tambo and how their local parish members serve, celebrate, heal, accompany and pray, particularly when times are hard in the bush.

We listen to their concern for some in mental health issues.

We listen to their challenges economically.

We listen to stories of their talents and lifestyle.

We thank them for their kindness and inspiration.

(.....stories now shared)

We joyfully acknowledge their gift to us of the ancient petrified wood.

We joyfully thank them for their friendship and their hospitality to visitors this year.

We joyfully pray for our sisters and brothers in central Queensland and for their preparation for Christmas.

Amen.

Fr Gerry Hefferan – ‘Joy’ – 11 December 2016

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/121116.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://tinyurl.com/parishFacebook11122016>]