

On the first Sunday of Advent, we spoke together about preparation – preparation to meet the Lord. I spoke about the necessity of silence which leads to prayer. Last Sunday, we heard the call of St John the Baptist to repent of our sins – because repentance from sin is also integral for our preparation to meet the Lord and for a worthy celebration of His coming at Christmas.

This week, on Gaudete Sunday, we rejoice because the celebration of our Savior’s birth is drawing so near and the Church puts before us readings which once again remind us of who Jesus is – that He is the Messiah, the One who fulfills every human longing. Literally, the Hebrew word “Messiah” means the “Anointed One”. The Anointed One of God was sent to save us from sin.

The first reading, the prophecy of Isaiah says when God comes the eyes of the blind will be opened, the ears of the deaf will be cleared, the lame will leap, and the mute will sing. Now, John the Baptist knew well this prophecy, as of course did Jesus. So John sends his disciples to ask Jesus if he is the Messiah. Jesus responds: Tell John the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, and the deaf hear. As soon as John heard this report, he would have known indeed that this is the Messiah, that this is the One in whom the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled.

And so for ourselves, maybe in order to strengthen our faith, we can ask Jesus the same question: “Are you the One who is to come or should we look for another?”. And then if we take some time to contemplate in stillness and silence we may come to realize:

1. When I take time to pray, I feel the presence of God.
2. When I take time to pray, I feel a peace and stillness in my heart that I know only Jesus can bring.
3. When I hear the Word of God proclaimed or read the Bible myself, I know deep down that it’s the truth.
4. When I hear the teachings of the Church, I know that this is God’s voice showing me the right way to live, even if sometimes I struggle to live up to that.
5. When I love someone or do good to someone only for the sake of love and for love of Jesus my heart swells with joy.
6. When I receive the Holy Eucharist, I experience true communion with God and even can begin to taste the glory of heaven.

When we take a moment in stillness and silence to contemplate these things, we have our answer to the question that John the Baptist posed.

Jesus is the Messiah because no one else can heal our blindness, can unstop our spiritual deafness, can bring life to the dead parts of our life as Jesus can and if we haven’t so clearly experienced these things, we must ask for them. Ask for them! It is good to ask for material things, but ask for spiritual things as well.

Continue to prepare for Jesus coming through silence, prayer, and repentance and wait in joyful patience. In the second reading, the farmer waits for the crops to grow to harvest. Ask, prepare, wait in joy and believe in Jesus the Messiah of God.

**Given by Father Mark Gurtner at Our Lady of Good Hope Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent, 2013.**