

Theme of the Week - Joy

Bishop David, our Bishop, has emphasized the term 'Mission' for Northampton Diocese. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19) This being when he said "We need to build communities of missionary discipleship around the diocese. These should be able to access oases of refreshment, renewal, and nourishment". In order to do this, to be Missionary disciples, we need to know the need for forgiveness and can confidently approach Jesus knowing that his mercy is freely available to us through his death on the cross and rising to life. Missionary disciples are Spirit-filled, relying on the power of the Holy Spirit in their daily lives. Missionary disciples are outward looking, always seeking opportunities to serve and help others in word and deed both within the Christian community and outside of it. Missionary disciples give generously of themselves and of what they have to others. Missionary disciples are fruitful; they display the fruits of the Spirit in their lives: 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.' (Galatians 5:22-23)

In the Gospel on Sunday, John the Baptist outlines his purpose and mission. We pray that we can be more like John; sure, of the path that God wants us to walk and to carry out his mission through us. If we are not sure of our mission or may have strayed away from it, what better time than in Advent to find the path once more and set our feet back on it with renewed resolve.

In the Gospel, John the Baptist explains that he is not the Light but a witness to the Light. The Light being the revelation of God. In Christ, we see clearly who God is and where we should follow to be true people of God. John, the writer of the Gospel, makes sure that John the Baptist is made subordinate to Christ and he does this through John's own words. "I am not the Messiah... 'But there stands among you - unknown to you - the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap."

The readings on Sunday speak of being sent, of being full of the spirit of God, of responding to that spirit with action and joyful hearts. The psalm on Sunday speaks of God as having done great things for us. It speaks of a merciful God who redresses the imbalance between rich and poor, advantaged and disadvantaged, the mighty and the lowly. The 1st reading from Isaiah tells us how we are to respond to the coming of God into our lives. It is like a song of joy, a hymn of rejoicing. We have been called by our baptism and we in turn are to give the good news of God's message to whomever we meet. We are to respond with joy.

The single pink candle of Advent that we light today, reminds us of the pink sky before sunrise that a new day is almost upon us. The waiting that is this Advent time reminds us that we are but awaiting the day when in time Jesus will come again in glory.

So as we break for our Christmas holiday let us make it our Mission to bring Joy to those around us.

Thank you for all your support with our Christmas hamper appeal. Your generosity will bring joy to a family most in need. Please spend this holiday thinking of others and where possible do something that can bring Joy to a family member, a friend or better still someone you don't know and least expects it. What greater gift can you give someone but Joy!

Have a Happy, safe and Holy Christmas.

Joy

Weekly Reflections
17th December 2023



A reading from the Gospel of St John (1:6-8,19-28)

A man came, sent by God.
His name was John.
He came as a witness,
as a witness to speak for the light,
so that everyone might believe through him.
He was not the light,
only a witness to speak for the light.

This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, 'I am not the Christ.' 'Well then,' they asked 'are you Elijah?' 'I am not' he said. 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.' So they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?' So John said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied:

a voice that cries in the wilderness:
Make a straight way for the Lord.'

Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, 'Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?' John replied, 'I baptise with water; but there stands among you - unknown to you - the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap.' This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

Prayer for the Week

Dearest Father, for whom we watch and wait, you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of your Son: give us courage to speak the truth, to hunger for justice, and to suffer for the cause of right so we too can bring Joy to others, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

Saint of the Week

St Anastasia



22nd December

She is said to have been married to a Roman nobleman, Publius. When Publius discovered she was a Christian and had been secretly baptized, he ordered her to be treated like a slave. She rejoiced at this opportunity to serve Christ. She devoted her life in ministering to those Christians imprisoned for their faith, performing numerous works of charity.
St Anastasia was

Grateful and
Generous

Day 1

Why do you think Bishop David has put so much importance on Mission?

What was John the Baptist's mission when speaking to the priests at the time?

How can you ensure we fully fulfil the Mission of God in our words and deeds this Advent?

Day 2

The readings from Sunday give us a sense of joy God will bring us. We light the pink candle on our Advent wreath for the theme of joy. How can you bring joy to others this Christmas?