

Theme of the Week - Joy

As we enter the third week of Advent, the theme being 'Joy', we hear in the Gospel of the great anticipation of Joy that will come and what people must do to fully experience this. The crowds wanted to be ready to welcome the Messiah. John told them what to do **"If anyone has two tunics he must share with the man who has none, and the one with something to eat must do the same."** His words are just as important for us today as they were then so that we too can be ready for Jesus. Today's candle in the Advent wreath is pink - a symbol of joy as we look forward to Christmas. We might think of ways that we can bring some joy to someone else who might be sick or lonely at this time. However, we should also celebrate the ways we have brought joy to people's lives this half term. Donating to our Christmas hampers, the Pillowcase and Baby Bank Appeal. The letter or card we wrote for the Preferential Option for the poor. All of us have brought some joy to someone this Christmas.

The Gospel describes the word of God coming to John in a very specific place and time. It is this word that defines John's mission. It is John's voice which calls the people of his time to a change of heart; to a new understanding of who they are and who God is. It is so easy to become distracted by all the fuss that goes on around us. The readings from Sunday encourage us to try and not stray away from God in our lives because it is God who will bring us Joy. In the second reading to the Philippians it starts with this **"I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord; I repeat, what I want is your happiness."** What a beautiful sentence but also something we need to remind ourselves of, God wants us to be happy, he wants us to have joy in our life; and we can by ensuring we have God in our lives! Advent is a time of yearning for transformation, and of preparing for its arrival. It is a time to open ourselves so that God can accomplish much through us, ordinary humans. The fruit can be seen in our relationships with people whom our society marginalises.

What are some of the things - relationships, past experiences, social pressures, present difficulties - that block the path of God in your own life? What voice is leading you to a change of heart? I hope you are all able to have a blessed, happy and Holy Christmas. Enjoy your holiday, have a rest but make sure some time is given over to Jesus so we don't forget the meaning of what Christmas is really about. Merry Christmas.



From the Gospel of Luke (21:25-28, 34-36)

When all the people asked John, 'What must we do?' he answered, 'If anyone has two tunics he must share with the man who has none, and the one with something to eat must do the same.' There were tax collectors too who came for baptism, and these said to him, 'Master, what must we do?' He said to them, 'Exact no more than your rate.' Some soldiers asked him in their turn, 'What about us? What must we do?' He said to them, 'No intimidation! No extortion! Be content with your pay!'

A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, 'I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.' As well as this, there were many other things he said to exhort the people and to announce the Good News to them.

Prayer for the Week

Heavenly Father,

Embrace our lives with Hope, Peace and Joy during this season of Advent, as we remember the coming of Jesus, as we anticipate his coming again, and as we strive to serve him better here and in the future.

Through Christ our Lord

Amen

Day 1

What does John say to those listening must do in order to be ready for Christ?

How have you prepared yourself for Christ? What good deeds have you done recently?

Day 2

What do you think John's mission is? Why is this mission important? God wants us to have happiness. How can you have happiness in your life by following His teachings?

Day 3

How might you listen to God over the Christmas holidays in order to bring change of happiness in your life?

Catholic Social Teaching - Option for the Poor

A preferential option for the poor means that we think first about the needs of those who are the most vulnerable. Jesus taught that when we feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, look after the sick and visit those imprisoned, we are looking after Him. We work wherever the need is greatest. We refuse to accept the suffering of our brothers and sisters. No one should be beyond reach of the love and support they need "The measure of the greatness of a society is found in the way it treats those most in need, those who have nothing apart from their poverty!"

The [Option for the Poor] affects the life of each Christian as he or she seeks to imitate the life of Christ." St Pope John Paul II, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, 42

How this half term can you promote the Common Good in all that you do in St Joseph's and society?

