

Gaude! Gaude! Emmanuel,

Nascetur pro te, Israel!

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel

Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Advent, the gift of time that the Church gives us to prepare for the coming of Jesus, changes a bit starting today. Until today, purple, the color of penance, has been prominent. But today, pink stands next to the purple. as a reminder that we have reason to be joyful, even to be joyful in the middle of sorrows or trials.

I admit that it can sometimes be difficult to be particularly joyful this time of the year.

Memories of Christmas's past and the near constant bombardment of perfect Christmases on television shape our expectations and they tend to run fairly high. Perhaps we set them too high. Maybe not.

My friends, when we have high expectations of other people, even ourselves, we are often disappointed, so it becomes easier and safer to keep our expectations lower, even when it comes to God.

Low expectations are rarely rewarded with anything more than mediocrity. Mediocrity is not likely to produce much joy.

A man with high expectations was John the Baptist. His whole life was a preparation to be the herald of the Messiah.

John recognized Jesus as "The Christ" at the Jordan River, and after John baptized Him, he dismissed his closest disciples to follow Jesus whom he called "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world", words we

recall at every Mass.

So, why do we see him in today's Gospel wondering, wanting to make sure Jesus is "the One"?

In ancient Israel being a prophet was a terminal condition. Very few of the good ones escaped being put to death. John was awaiting his own execution for speaking the word of God.

And those who are close to death, by nature, become more introspective.

Now, whether or not John really doubted that Jesus was the Messiah isn't as clear as the text might appear. But he does teach us something about doubt. And that is that doubt is not necessarily a bad thing because it makes us ask questions..... hopefully good questions.

John's question prompted Jesus' public response that He was indeed the Messiah.

**the blind regain their sight,
the lame walk,
lepers are cleansed,
the deaf hear,
the dead are raised,
and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.**

The expectation of the Messiah was very high, and Jesus met and exceeded those hopes and that must have made John very joyful, even in chains and facing certain death.

Joy in the midst of adversity is one of the most attractive qualities of the Christian that wins so many converts to Christ both in the Early Church as-well-as today.

And rejoicing is what today is all about,

How do we go beyond the average and enter into the joyous?

Sorrow often comes from dwelling on what we have lost, whether that be a loved one, diminished wealth or decreased health.

Could joy be prompted by accepting and dwelling on what we have?

The Good News of today's Gospel is this: We already have all that we need to change if that is our desire.

Consider this rather odd thing Jesus says concerning John the Baptist::

**“among those born of women
there has been none greater than John the Baptist;
yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he”**

John only caught a glimpse of the first light before sunrise but even that was enough for him to be at peace and to know joy.

The full light of the Kingdom would not break upon the world until Easter morning.

The birth of Jesus, his teaching and even his miracles were but a preparation for the Kingdom of God, for the righteousness, peace, love, and joy that could only have been made possible by the Messiah's death, resurrection, and sending of the Spirit.

So who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven? Who is greater than John the Baptist? The little baby who is incapable of doing very much at all, but who through the saving waters of baptism, is born into the Kingdom of God . This baby is born not only of woman, like John, but of water and the Holy Spirit..... like us!

If we have been baptised, whether as an infant or in our old age, then we too are living within the Kingdom! Everything is different because the King has come, the King has been raised and the King will come again.

The King and the Kingdom are real and they both exceed all of our human expectations, and we can take solace in the great things yet to come.

Regret becomes forgiveness.

Mortality becomes Immortality.

The blindness of our humanity will become the beatific vision of God.

This valley of tears will become endless joy!

Through the Holy Spirit poured out upon us in baptism, all virtues are already ours. We have hope in the resurrection and we have available to us patience and courage and, yes, even joy to endure all hardships till then.

We are created to be the pink standing among the purple!

And that indeed is Good News!

PETITIONS:

For the Church, that she continue to proclaim the Good News to all the world.....We pray to the Lord

For our public leaders, that they act in righteousness and govern by principles that promote the sacredness of lifeWe pray to the Lord

For those imprisoned and for those persecuted for their faith,We pray to the Lord

For those who are hungry, those who are abandoned and those who have no one to pray for themWe pray to the Lord