



FAITH CIRCLES

WEEKLY SMALL GROUP CATECHESIS

3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT • YEAR B

SUNDAY GOSPEL

Filled with Joy

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.

A WORD FROM POPE FRANCIS



For two weeks already, the Season of Advent has been calling us to spiritual vigilance in preparing the way for the Lord who is to come.

On this third Sunday, the liturgy sets forth another interior attitude by which to live out this time of waiting for the Lord, that is joy. The joy of Jesus, "Joy is at home in Jesus". We propose Jesus' joy to the world!

The human heart desires joy. We all desire joy, every family, every people aspires to happiness. But what is the joy that the Christian is called to live out and bear witness to? It is the joy

that comes from the *closeness of God*, from his *presence* in our life.

From the moment Jesus entered into history, with his birth in Bethlehem, humanity received the seed of the Kingdom of God, like the soil receives the seed, the promise of a future harvest. There is no need to look further! Jesus has come to bring joy to all people for all time. It is not just a hopeful joy or a joy postponed until paradise: as if here on earth we are sad but in paradise we will be filled with joy. No! It is not that, but a joy already real and tangible now, because *Jesus himself is our joy*, and with Jesus joy finds its home, and without Jesus is there joy? No! He is living, He is the Risen One, and He works in us and among us especially with the Word and the Sacraments.

We who are baptized, children of the Church, we are called to accept ever anew the presence of God among us and to help others to discover Him, or to rediscover what they have forgotten. It is a most beautiful mission, like that of John the Baptist: to direct the people to Christ — not to ourselves! — for He is the destination to which the human heart tends when it seeks joy and happiness.

In today's liturgy St Paul again indicates the conditions for being "missionaries of joy": praying constantly, always giving thanks to God, giving way to his Spirit, seeking the good and avoiding evil (cf. 1 Thess 5:17-22). If this becomes our lifestyle,

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then the Good News will be able to enter so many homes and help people and families to rediscover that in Jesus lies salvation. In Him it is possible to find interior peace and the strength to face different life situations every day, even the heaviest and most difficult.

No one has ever heard of a sad saint with a mournful face. This is unheard of! It would be a contradiction. The Christian's heart is filled with peace because he knows how to place his joy in the Lord even when going

through the difficult moments in life. To have faith does not mean to never have difficult moments but to have the strength to face those moments knowing that we are not alone. And this is the peace that God gives to his children.

With her gaze turned to Christmas already close at hand, the Church invites us to bear witness that Jesus is not a person of the past; He is the Word of God who today continues to illuminate the path of mankind; his

gestures — the Sacraments — are the manifestation of the tenderness, consolation and love that the Father bears for every human being. May the Virgin Mary, “cause of our joy”, render us ever more joyous in the Lord, who comes to free us from the many forms of interior and exterior slavery.

DISCUSS TOGETHER

1. Pope Francis suggests that ‘the human heart desires joy. We all desire joy, every family, every people aspires to happiness’. But the question he poses is where do we place our joy, where do we seek and find fulfilling joy? Where is this place for you, how do you find the joy of which Pope Francis speaks?
2. Pope Francis writes that ‘the Christian's heart is filled with peace because he/she knows how to place their joy in the Lord even when going through the difficult moments in life. Has this been your experience, what has Jesus' presence meant for you during the tough times in your life – has it brought joy?

PRAY TOGETHER

Pray for Each Other

- Invite each member to share an intention for which they would like prayer
- As a group pray out loud for each person in turn

Response

Jesus, fan into flame the joy of love for you in my heart.

Closing Prayer

Jesus, we thank you for the joy which you bring to our lives and hearts. Encourage and sustain us with your presence that we may bring this joy and peace to all whom we meet. Amen.