



THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT, CYCLE B

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"I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, 'make straight the way of the Lord,' as Isaiah the prophet said." John 1:23

We enter this third Sunday of Advent, "*Gaudete Sunday*" with the Church setting the theme, "*Gaudete! Rejoice!*" in our Entrance Antiphon: "*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Indeed the Lord is near.*" Notice the third candle of the Advent Wreath is of a rose color to signify the color of the sky at sunrise.

In our beautifully chosen readings today, all proclaim *Good News*, THE *Good News of the Coming of Jesus Christ*: Isaiah, "*The Lord God has anointed me and sent me to bring glad tidings*", Paul, "*Brothers and Sisters: Rejoice always!*" and John the Baptist "*He came to testify to the light so that all might believe through him.*" God is with us, working through them down through the ages. They are anointed, blessed, and sent. Let us, too, rejoice in sharing the *Good News* of Christ.

The concern of the Pharisees is with the meaning of John's baptisms. They asked him, "*Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?*" Various baptismal rites were practiced at that time, including that of the Essenes (the group probably responsible for writing the Dead Sea Scrolls) and the Jewish practice of baptizing converts to Judaism. John justifies his baptisms as preparation for the one who will come after him and who surpasses him in importance. John, in stark humility, repeatedly denies that he is the central figure and points to Jesus as the Messiah. He is merely a reflector of God's glory.

In reflection this week, this is our calling, as well, to be God's reflector. Like John, we too must insist that we are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah "the prophet." The Jews expected a Messiah, an anointed servant of God. They also expected Elijah to return before End Times, the "*Day of the Lord*," a day of judgment. But it was John who inaugurates the new age. John is the "*hinge prophet*" born before Christ and the first prophet after the birth of Christ. The "prophet" fulfilling Moses' promise of a future prophet like himself. In humility, the Baptist preaches that he is simply a voice crying in the wilderness. We are called to follow his example.

John the Baptist testifies to the light and says he is the voice of one crying out in the desert, "*I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, 'make straight the way of the Lord.'*"

Today more than ever, the world needs witnesses that carry the Light of Christ, illuminating the darkest corner of despair in the lives of those in our Communities where the Lord, providentially, has planted us, and has nurtured us since our baptism. We follow in the footsteps of Jesus, who was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan. Our lives in Christ are the living Word made flesh. Through us, He dwells among us. Let the sky above us blaze in His Glory. Let the children rejoice and sing as they join the Choir of Angels,

"Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth may peace and love reign among us."

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John

A man named John was sent from God.
He came for testimony, to testify to the light,
so that all might believe through him.
He was not the light,
but came to testify to the light.

And this is the testimony of John.
When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests
and Levites to him
to ask him, "Who are you?"
He admitted and did not deny it,
but admitted, "I am not the Christ."
So they asked him,
"What are you then? Are you Elijah?"
And he said, "I am not."
"Are you the Prophet?"
He answered, "No."
So they said to him,
"Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us?
What do you have to say for yourself?"
He said:
"I am the voice of one crying out in the desert,
'make straight the way of the Lord,'"
as Isaiah the prophet said."
Some Pharisees were also sent.
They asked him,
"Why then do you baptize
if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?"
John answered them,
"I baptize with water;
but there is one among you whom you do not recognize,
the one who is coming after me,
whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie."
This happened in Bethany across the Jordan,
where John was baptizing.

The Gospel of the Lord

