

WHAT ARE WE TO DO? BE HAPPY!

We want to celebrate Christ's coming with a new heart and enormous joy. That is the meaning of "Advent". Let's ask ourselves if we have done all that we were supposed to: "Have I announced the good news of the Gospel to someone? Have I mended broken hearts? Have I proclaimed pardon to anyone? Have I brought happiness to somebody? have I dedicated time to read more the word of the Lord?" We run the risk of living in a world of light and yet, not see, because of pure routine. Saint John reminds us to be on guard: "Amongst you, there is one whom you don't know."

Pope Francis called his first apostolic exhortation "The joy of the Gospel" published in October 2014; this joy fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus.

Today is "Joyful Sunday" the "**entrance antiphon.**" Is: "**Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near**". Happiness is a privilege from God, is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and is the characteristic of His Kingdom.

It is a good time to think of everything He has done for us and thank Him for it. St Paul has told us in the Second Reading "Be always happy". This means that happiness is possible. And we are called to live it - with our feet on the ground and aware of the problems around us.

Joy is an essential characteristic of the life of Faith. To feel loved and saved by God is a treasure; to feel

conscious we are brothers in Jesus, who gave his life for us, is the basic motivation of our Christian joy.

Christian happiness stems from thanksgiving, basically because of the Love our Lord radiates over us; every Sunday, through the Eucharist, we do so in communion with Christ.

This joyful Sunday is a window of joy and brightness and the reason why the **rose-coloured** vestments and Advent candle.

Why is the Church inviting all believers to rejoice at the midpoint of Advent?

It's because Christmas is coming **closer**; in less than two weeks, we will celebrate once again the **coming** of our Lord and Saviour to earth, the **source** of all Christian joy. This is the **only** source of the true, lasting joy.

And further, we rejoice because he the Lord brings such good news. The First Reading quotes, from the prophet Isaiah, a text which Jesus, in Luke's gospel, will apply to himself: ***"The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me for the Lord has anointed me."*** Jesus clearly identifies himself with the anointed king who is the Messiah and Saviour of God's people. *And why has he come? Why has he been sent?* "He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to bind up hearts that are broken; to proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to those in prison; to proclaim a year of grace

from the Lord.” The Lord has really come to liberate us from our sins, then we surely have cause to rejoice.

The kingdom of heaven is...Salvation; it is a real experience which we are all being called to share in our lives here and now. If we have not yet had that experience, then we can say that Christmas has never really come into our lives. We have not really met Jesus yet, the Jesus who makes us whole, who frees us from our forms of captivity. ***“There stands among you -unknown to you -the one who is coming after me.”***

Jesus is the light and John is a witness to speak for the light. Each one of us, by our baptism and our membership in Christ’s family, has been sent to give witness to the Light. We are “the light of the world”.

We have been called to be the means to bring Jesus into other people’s lives.

At Christmas time, many places are bathed in light. For we Christians that light symbolises our Lord Jesus, the Light of the World. And we may ask ourselves into the lives of how many people this Christmas will we bring the Light of Jesus? How many will experience Jesus being reborn within them through our witnessing? Do we have light inside us? We have plenty of opportunities to share Christ’s light with others, especially the people we marginalized with our attitudes, actions...we have time and chances to give the light of the Gospel to them....

There are so many people out there who live in darkness. There are so many who are poor in so many ways, even though financially well-off. So many who are deafened by the consumerist din around them. So many, in the midst of all the superficial jollity, who feel lonely, unwanted, rejected, marginalised. So many broken hearts amid all the party-going. There are people who simply don't like Christmas because it only increases their inner pain and deep sadness.

So many out there are waiting; waiting for us to shine the light of Christ on them and to turn their lives into experiences of joy; of wholeness and integrity.

"Lord Jesus, make me a herald of your word of truth and grace. Help me to be a faithful witness of the joy of the Gospel and to point others to you as John did through his testimony."