

**Second Sunday of Advent
10 December 2017**

“People of Sion, behold the Lord shall come to save the nations: and the Lord shall make the glory of His voice to be heard in the joy of your heart.” (Introit)

Today’s Holy Mass brings us closer to the Coming of Jesus at Christmas. We are reminded of the great hope that we should have in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who comes to give all men salvation. We see this especially in today’s *Epistle to Romans* (15:4-13) in which St. Paul cites several passages from the Old Testament informing the Jews that the Messiah would bring great joy to the Gentiles who also would be invited into the Kingdom. In the *Gospel* (Mt. 11:2-10), we are given the text in which St. John the Baptist sends some of his followers to ask Christ if He is the anointed one, the Messiah. St. John does this, not for his own information, but for his followers so that they will know that Jesus is the true Messiah and that he, John, is only his precursor. With today’s prayers and readings, we are filled with joy and hope in the Incarnation, the greatest event the world has seen. Nothing could be more important than the Son of God becoming man and dwelling among us in order to bring us redemption from sin and eternal happiness in His kingdom.

“And there shall come forth a branch out of the rod of Jesse, and a flower shall rise out of his root. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him...” Is. 11: 1

Dom Gueranger in his book, *The Liturgical Year Vol. 1*, shows how the prophet Isaiah foretells the coming Messiah: **“How much is contained in these magnificent words of the prophet! The branch; the flower that is to come from it; the Spirit which rests on the flower; the seven gifts of the Spirit; peace and confidence established on the earth; and, throughout the world, one brotherhood in the kingdom of the Messias! St. Jerome...says that the branch which cometh forth from the root of Jesse, is the blessed Virgin Mary, who had contact with no shrub or plant; and that the flower is the Lord Jesus, who says in *Canticle of canticles*: ‘I am the flower of the field, and the lily of the valley.’ In every age of the Christian Church this wonderful branch and its divine flower have been objects of enthusiastic**

veneration. In the middle ages the tree of Jesse, with its prophetic branches, was carved on the cathedral porches, was painted on the windows, was embroidered on the hanging of the sanctuary, and the melodious voice of the priests sang its praises in the beautiful responsory composed by Fulbert of Chartres, and put to music by the devout king Robert. ‘R. The root of Jesse gave out a branch, and the branch a flower; *and on the flower resteth the holy Spirit. V. The Virgin Mother of God is the branch, her Son the flower. *And on the flower resteth the holy Spirit.’”

“The devout St. Bernard, commenting upon this responsory in his second Advent homily, says: ‘The Virgin’s Son is the flower, a flower white and ruddy, chosen out of thousands; a flower on whom the angels love to look; a flower whose fragrance restores the dead; a flower, as himself assures us, of the field, not of a garden; for the flowers of the field bloom without man’s care, no man has sown their seed, no man has cultivated them. Just so the Virgin’s womb, a meadow verdant in an endless spring, has brought forth a flower, whose beauty will never droop, whose freshness will never fade. O Virgin, branch sublime, to what a height are thou grown! Even up to Him that sitteth on the throne, even to the Lord of majesty. It was sure to be so, for thou castest deep down the roots of humility. O plant of heaven indeed! Precious above all, holier than all. O tree of life indeed! Alone worthy to bear the fruit of salvation.’” Gueranger, p. 161-2

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope, and in the power of the Holy Spirit.” Rom. 15:13

St. Paul reminds us that if we truly wish to belong to Christ and experience the joy and peace that comes with hoping in Him, then we must have one mind toward one another after the example of Jesus Christ: ***“Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of one mind one towards another, according to Jesus Christ; that with one mind and with one mouth you may glorify God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ .*** Rom. 15:5-6. St. Paul reminds the Romans that they must receive one another as Christ has received them: ***“Wherefore receive one another, as Christ also hath received you unto the honour of God.”*** Rom.

15:7. St. Paul then recounts how Jesus had made Himself *“the minister of circumcision”* (Rom. 15:8) to fulfil the promises made to the Jews, but now He has opened His kingdom to include the Gentiles who will *“glorify God for His mercy, as it is written.”* Rom. 15:9

Call of the Gentiles

As St. Paul is writing to the Romans, he praises God for extending His call to His Kingdom not just for the Jews but also the Gentiles. He cites Psalm 17:50 and 2 Kgs. 22:50: *“Therefore will I praise thee among the Gentiles, and will sing to thy name.’ And again he says, ‘Rejoice you Gentiles, with his people.’ And again, he says (Ps. 116:1), ‘Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles; sing his praises, all you peoples.’ And again Isaiah (Is. 11:10) says, ‘There shall be the root of Jesse, and he who shall arise to rule the Gentiles...in him the Gentiles shall hope.’”* Rom. 15:9-12 **This ‘Root of Jesse’ is the Branch from the root of Jesse who is Christ, Who, as the Son of David was sprung from Jesse the father of David”** (Msgr. Patrick Boylan, *The Sunday Epistles and Gospels*, p. 13) St. Paul concludes this passage with a prayer that the Romans will be filled with joy and peace from the God of hope for believing in Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit who will fill them with these blessings for their belief in Christ: *“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope and in power of the Holy Spirit.”* Rom 15:13

“Go and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them....” Mt. 11:4

Dom Gueranger comments on the many spiritual and material blessings prophesied of the Messiah and realized in today’s Gospel: **“Thou art He that was to come, O Jesus! We look for no other. We are blind, Thou has enlightened us; we were lame, Thou hast made us walk; the leprosy of sin disfigured us, Thou hast cleansed us; we were deaf to Thy words, Thou hast given us hearing; we were dead to sin, Thou hast given us life again; we were poor and had none to care for us, Thou hast come to us with every aid and consolation. These have been, and will again be,**

the blessings of Thy visit to our souls, O Jesus! A visit silent but wonderful in its work; which flesh and blood cannot understand, but which faithful hearts feel is granted them. Come, my Saviour, come to me, Thy condescension, and familiarity with such poverty as mine, shall not scandalize me; Thy workings in the souls of men are proof enough that Thou are God. He alone, that created souls, can heal them.” Gueranger, p. 167

All Messianic Blessings in Jesus Christ

The words of Jesus in today’s *Gospel* (Mt. 11:2-10) would certainly have stimulated the hope that the Gentiles would have in Christ. Who could ever imagine that a man would be able to do these things? Only those who were familiar with Isaiah’s words on the blessings of the Messiah would have expected it in the coming Holy One of God. Jesus brings all these blessings to men. St. John the Baptist knew who Jesus was as he baptized him in the Jordan and called out for all to hear: *“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. This is he of whom I said, ‘After me there comes one who has been set above me, because he was before me...”* Jn. 1:29-30 Jesus also knew John and praised John: *“What went ye out to the desert to see? A reed swaying in the wind? What then went ye out to see? A man clad in luxurious garments?To see a prophet? Yea, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written ‘Behold I send My messenger before thee, and he will prepare they way before thee.’”* Mt. 11: 7-10

Will we be able to recognize Christ’s Coming?

We too will recognize Christ this Christmas if we are like St. John the Baptist. As he tried to prepare men’s hearts for the coming of the Messiah, so we too should be preparing ourselves for the coming of Christ on Christmas Day. We should imitate St. John the Baptist in our preparation: he is steadfast and firm unlike the reed which bends in the wind. St. John did not bow to popular opinion and consensus. He was a man of great self-denial who survived twenty-five years in the desert on locusts and wild honey; he did not dress in the soft garments and live in the palaces of kings. St. John’s whole life was one of great self-denial and mortification from the pleasures of this world. Likewise we must prepare for Christ spiritually by

prayer, self-denial and total dedication to the gospel message. Then we will recognize Christ on Christmas Day as did the shepherds, the Magi, and the angels and we shall worship in great wonder and joy proclaiming: *“Glory to God in the Highest and peace on earth among men of good will.”* Lk. 2:14

Addendum: for your spiritual life!

“...regaining lost joy ...”

A Good Confession

If we want to regain some of the lost joy which we should have in this world when we think of our heavenly home then we need to make a good confession of our sins. Pope John Paul in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Reconciliation and Penance*, (2 December, 1984, 31, III) tells us that every contrite confession is **“a drawing near to the holiness of God, a rediscovery of one’s true identity, which has been upset and disturbed by sin, a liberation in the very depths of one’s self and thus a regaining of lost joy, the joy of being saved, which the majority of people in our time are no longer capable of experiencing.”**