



Third week of Advent

“Go and tell John what you hear and see: 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.”

MATTHEW 11: 4-5

Rejoice, for the Lord is near

There may be moments when we feel paralyzed or defeated by the enormity of violence in the world. We may wish for and even pray for God to intervene in big, dramatic ways. We may wonder why God isn't doing more.

In the Gospel reading for this Sunday John the Baptist instructs his disciples to go ask Jesus, who hadn't toppled the political rulers of Israel or even freed John from jail, if Jesus really is the Messiah. We can almost hear John thinking “If you are the Messiah, then why aren't you doing more?”

Jesus replies by naming what he had done: heal the sick, cure the afflicted, raise the dead, and proclaim good news to the poor. Jesus' power is displayed mostly in humble acts of service, responding to individual needs – not in spectacular displays of political deliverance. This is the way of the Lord in our contemporary world as well: Filled with the Spirit, we serve one another and persist in small actions for justice and mercy.

Bishop Paride Taban spoke at the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference about his experience as a peacemaker in war-torn South Sudan. After being imprisoned and mistreated by rebel forces, Bishop Taban publicly forgave them. “I looked on them just as my mother did on me as a child. I forgave them,” he said. “And now for forgiving them all, all of them – the rebels and the government – [show me] love. The only person who can meet both the government and the opposition party is me.” ... “That is the way of nonviolence, to be a

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shepherd who loves all the sheep. That's what Jesus has shown us.”

Bishop Taban demonstrates that being a peacemaker requires not only perseverance and courage but also creativity and openness. “Nothing is lost when we effectively enter into dialogue,” Pope Francis said in Assisi last September. “Nothing is impossible if we turn to God in prayer. Everyone can be an artisan of peace.”

The peacemakers at the conference in Rome have sent an appeal to Pope Francis that includes a request for an encyclical on nonviolence and Just Peace, to call the entire world to build cultures of nonviolence. They also ask the Church to integrate nonviolence into its life and work at every level and to promote nonviolent practices, such as “nonviolent resistance, restorative justice, trauma healing, unarmed civilian protection, conflict transformation, and peacebuilding strategies” throughout the world.

Faced with the crisis of violence, we need to be transformed and transformational. Advent shows us that we can do so with joy because the Lord is near. We light a pink candle this week, to symbolize our joy.

Questions for Reflection

What gives you joy during this Advent season?

What can you do to be an artisan for peace?

Advent Reflection Guide – Third Sunday, December 11, 2016

Lighting of the Candle

TWO PURPLE AND ONE PINK CANDLE

We light these candles because, like God's people centuries ago, we rejoice in the coming of our savior.

Gospel Reading: MATTHEW 11:2-11

When John heard in prison of the works of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to him with this question, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" Jesus said to them in reply, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: 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. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."

As they were going off, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out to the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? Then what did you go out to see? Someone dressed in fine clothing? Those who wear fine clothing are in royal palaces. Then why did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: 'Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way before you.' Amen, I say to you, 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.

Prayer

Prepare our hearts, O Lord, and remove the sadness that hinders us from knowing the joy and hope which only your presence can give. We lift our hearts and say:

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Let your forbearance be known to all, for the Lord is near at hand; have no anxiety about anything, but in all things, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God. Lord, you have blessed your land; you have turned away the captivity of Jacob."

(Philippians 4:4–6, Entrance Antiphon for the Third Sunday of Advent)



"The work in Bangladesh is concerned with the whole world: Namely, the world will have peace only when there is peace between religions. To serve the poor and live with them is peacebuilding."

– FATHER ROBERT McCAHILL
Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers
(Pictured on left, in Bangladesh)

Response

Take time this week to live joyfully. Smile and laugh more; be intentional about your thoughts and refocus when necessary; count your blessings and be thankful.

Name ways you can bring joy to someone who needs encouragement to persevere, and do it!

Name a social problem that moves you to want to make a difference. Is there a person or group that you can ask to help you get involved?

Watch videos and read transcripts of the testimonies of the peacemakers at the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference, in particular Pietro Ameglio from Mexico, Jesuit Father Francisco de Roux from Colombia, Maria Stephan from the U.S. Institute of Peace, and Lisa Sowle Cahill from Boston College.

<https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/videos-nonviolence-conference-fishbowl-sessions/>