

Weekly Update from Father John 12-14-17

Dear members and friends of our parish family,

On this upcoming Third Sunday of Advent the opening sentence of our reading from Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians (5:16-24) expresses perfectly the spirit we are called to cultivate as we await the coming light of Christ: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances." Written around the year 50 and the earliest of the New Testament writings, 1 Thessalonians offers a sense of friendly encouragement to the congregation Paul founded in Thessalonica, which was then the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia. Our reading, which is from the letter's conclusion, serves to anchor the community in hope as they wait in anticipation of Christ's return. Like the epistle readings from our previous Sundays in Advent, 1 Thessalonians gives specific directions for faithful living in order that, "your soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." This message of assurance and perseverance is rooted in grateful acceptance of Christ's promised return as realized in day-to-day living. We are reminded of this call to rejoice with the lighting of the pink candle in our Advent wreath. Now at the midway point of the four week journey from darkness to light, the Third Sunday of Advent, also known as Gaudete Sunday, from the Latin for rejoice, we are encouraged that our expectation will soon be fulfilled in the coming Incarnation.

Our Gospel passage (John 1:6-8, 19-28) again centers on the figure of John the Baptist. As the passage begins, we are introduced to John: "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." Apart from Jesus, no one else in John's Gospel is described as being sent from God. Indeed, John the Baptist was part of the Divine plan; his call was to be a witness to "testify to the light." His task was to enable others to see the light. While John the Baptist's message is not quite the same as Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians to rejoice, he orients us to the coming Christ and urges us to prepare. As we continue our own preparations, I ask you to consider your cause to rejoice. How has God blessed you in the person of Jesus? Can you give thanks in all circumstances as Paul urges us? When is it difficult? Can you call on Jesus to help? Are you ready to give thanks in all circumstances?

As we look ahead to the coming week, remember that during Advent we are operating on a modified Sunday schedule that includes Morning Prayer at 8:30am followed by Advent study at 9. If you are not a regular practitioner of the Daily Morning and Evening Prayer Offices of our Prayer Book, I urge you to consider cultivating this practice during Advent and experience how it can broaden your worship. Please speak to me if you'd like to learn more about the practice of the Daily Office and its place in the Anglican tradition.

Finally, this coming Wednesday at 4:30pm we continue our Advent study in partnership with the MDI parishes. Join me and others at St. Saviour as we come together in fellowship to reflect on Advent as it is specifically manifest in music and explored in the writing of our chosen book of Advent reflections, "Let Every Heart Prepare." I hope to see you there.

Faithfully,
John+