**Third Sunday of Advent, Cycle B, 2014**

Isaiah 61: 1-2a, 10-11; 1 Thes 5: 16-24; John 1: 6-8, 19-28

December 13/14, 2014

Jesus is coming! He is definitely coming. If this is not good news, then what is? If the coming of Jesus does not bring joy to your heart, then what will? There is no doubt about it, he will be coming soon and we will not be able on that day to mistake him for something or someone else. Jesus will come in all his glory, and then we will see him clearly, and know ourselves well.

Jesus has already come as a baby in a manger, born of a virgin mother and a divine Father, born in Bethlehem of Judea under the reign of Caesar Augustus over 2000 years ago and now he continually comes into our lives and our world each and every moment of each and every day, although in a rather hidden way, a way that requires faith to see. But when he comes again someday in the future, someday, sometime, whether we are ready or not, we will that day recognize him clearly; we won’t be able to ignore him or be confused about him. He will come in unmistakable glory and the last influence of sin in the world will be destroyed and Satan and all his lies will be completely exposed. There will be no more confusion; no more uncertainty; no more not recognizing Jesus. We will recognize who he is and we will know perfectly well who we are.

But until then, we walk by faith, not by sight, so we can get confused about ourselves and Jesus, just like the people in the Gospel today.

John the Baptist knew who he was and who he was not. He knew he wasn‘t the Prophet, or Elijah, or the Messiah. Because he had this humility, he was able to recognize Jesus when he came. He was able to say, “Look! There is the Lamb of God! Go to him!”

It was John’s humility, his self-knowledge, and his faith that gave him clear sight. One greater than him was coming. A greater one, of whom John said he wasn’t worthy to untie his sandal straps. A man who untied sandals back then was considered a slave. An abject slave. Yet John was saying he wasn’t even worthy of that in the sight of the Messiah. In John’s opinion he was only a lonely voice in the wilderness, crying out. John knew himself, and he knew and recognized Jesus when he came. Because of that, Jesus said John was the greatest man born of a man and woman who ever lived. Do we know who we are and who Jesus is? Most of us will probably have to say, “Not really. I know about Jesus but I don’t see him very clearly.”

If we don’t embrace our humility, and humility is actually another way of saying “knowing ourselves well,” both our gifts and talents as well as

our shortcomings and failures, if we don’t have humility, if we don’t know ourselves well, then we will get all self-concerned and worried and everything will be about us, and if that happens, then we won’t recognize Jesus when he comes to us.

Indeed, there is one among us now whom we do not recognize. If only we would recognize him! With John the Baptist we could then say to the entire world:

*Look! There is the Lamb of God! Look! There is Jesus!*

The Spirit of God has anointed you! You have been anointed to know Jesus and to point out his coming to others, to bring glad tidings to the poor, to bring good news to the people, to heal men and women whose hearts are broken, to free those held captive. The only way of doing all that is to know Jesus Christ coming into the world, and to remain firmly attached to his Body, the Church, and to eat his Body and drink his Blood.

My friends, this is a great joy! God will be the joy of your soul. Jesus alone, in the power of the Spirit and sent by the Father, comes with that joy. There is no one else who can give you joy. The Lord is in a certain sense pure joy. The world cannot give it. Satan cannot give it. But Jesus can and his Holy Church does. This is the “Joy of the Gospel” of which our Holy Father so often speaks.

Joyful people recognize the presence of Jesus Christ in the world. Sour and discouraged people do not.

Don’t quench the Spirit of God, we are told in our second reading today. Don’t quench the Spirit who brings you joy, a joy of the Gospel which clarifies our sight, sharpens our vision so we like John can know who we are and who Jesus is and when he comes, and how he comes into our lives and our world, and we can point him out to others and lead them to his community of believers, his Holy Church.

To know Jesus is to know ourselves. To point Jesus out to others is the work of every man and woman who calls himself Christian. Let us, in what remains of Advent, recognize the Lord’s coming, prepare well, and lead others to him.