

Third Sunday of Advent 2016

MY MESSENGER... (Mt. 11:2-11)

On this Third Sunday of Advent, also known as “Gaudete Sunday” (“Sunday of Joy”), a new light is kindled on our journey toward Bethlehem—*that of the Lord’s messenger*.

In the eleventh chapter of his Gospel, Matthew helps us understand the mysteries of God’s actions.

In fact, after speaking to his disciples and tracing out a missionary identikit, Jesus sets out to proclaim the Kingdom of God in all the cities of the region. Addressing the crowds, he returns to the subject of John the Baptist’s witness, casting light on his testimony and clarifying it. This desert dweller, he says, who was well known to the crowds, *is the messenger* sent by God to prepare the way of the Lord (cf. Mt. 3:1).

Why does Jesus feel the need to make such a solemn declaration about the Baptist? Unfortunately, John is not present to hear his words because he is in prison for fearlessly speaking the truth.

He is alone, abandoned in a dungeon in the depths of Herod’s fortress. Engulfed in a sea of doubt, he is going through a rigid desert experience. Jesus, who knows where John is, reveals the Baptist’s greatness at the precise moment in which he has been humiliated to the maximum. More than any other person, John needs to hear the words of Jesus so as to revive his confidence. At this moment the Baptist, who ceaselessly proclaimed the coming of the Messiah to the throngs that approached him, needs to hear the reassuring words of Jesus more than they do. *Thanks to the messengers of the Gospel* sent back to him by Jesus, the voice of the Lord reaches him—fresh and invigorating words overflowing with meaning and eternity:



***“John, my brother, you didn’t make a mistake!
Don’t give in to doubts! You are the messenger
of the Lord, above all right now, in this time
of acute suffering, which I will share with you
to the last drop. No, John, you didn’t make
a mistake! I am here to tell the world who
you really are, above all in the sight of God.
No, John, you didn’t make a mistake!
I am the One for whom you have been waiting:
the Light for your eyes; the vigor for your step;
the blessing for your heart; the Word
for your ears; the Life beyond your death;
your everlasting joy.”***

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