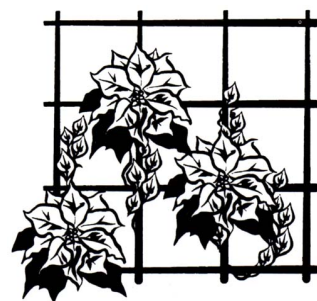


3rd Sunday of Advent C

*Rejoice in the Lord always;
again I say, rejoice!
The Lord is near. (cf. Ph 4:4; Entrance Antiphon)*



First Reading

Zephaniah 3:14-18

Shout for joy, daughter of Zion, Israel, shout aloud! Rejoice, exult with all your heart, daughter of Jerusalem! The Lord has repealed your sentence; he has driven your enemies away. The Lord, the king of Israel, is in your midst; you have no more evil to fear. When that day comes, word will come to Jerusalem: Zion, have no fear, do not let your hands fall limp. The Lord your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult with joy over you, he will renew you by his love; he will dance with shouts of joy for you as on a day of festival.

Second Reading

Philippians 4:4-7

I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord; I repeat, what I want is your happiness. Let your tolerance be evident to everyone: the Lord is very near. There is no need to worry; but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand, will guard your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ Jesus.

When all the people asked John, "What must we do, then?" he answered, "If anyone has two tunics he must share with the man who has none, and the one with something to eat must do the same." There were tax collectors too who came for baptism, and these said to him, "Master, what must we do?" He said to them, "Exact no more than your rate." Some soldiers asked him in their turn, "What about us? What must we do?" He said to them, "No intimidation! No extortion! Be content with your pay!"

A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, "I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out." As well as this, there were many other things he said to exhort the people and to announce the Good News to them.

Meditation

When Luke writes his gospel several decades after the Ascension, it is the Church, through the ministry of the apostles, which is conferring Christian baptism in the Spirit. His account is certainly not without a basis in history, but what interests him most is the history of salvation which continues to unfold in the primitive community. The expectation of an imminent end is fading. The Baptist's exhortations to conversion take on a new meaning. They are a challenge to transform our everyday lives.

Today Luke introduces us to crowds of people of good will from every walk of life. Attentive to the Precursor's preaching, they have become aware that they must change their lives. Like them, we ask, "What must we do?" As the prelude to any conversion, we must renounce all self-sufficiency; we must acknowledge the necessity of being pierced to the heart by a word which will draw us out of ourselves. Thus, in the circumstances of our own lives, we must accomplish the obligations of social justice, mutual aid and charity. We join those innumerable people who open their lives to the unforeseen, to form a "people in waiting". Precursors still rise up among us. They prepare the way by setting before us the great questions of life and death. God's prophets refer to one more powerful than themselves, the one whom we await: Jesus Christ, who continually baptizes us in both fire and the Spirit.