



Reflection from Ben Babaran

“On this third Sunday of Advent, known as the Sunday “of joy”, the Word of God invites us on the one hand to joy, and on the other hand to the awareness that existence also includes moments of doubt, in which it is difficult to believe. Joy and doubt are both experiences that are part of our lives.” – Pope Francis

Our text from Isaiah drips with joy. “The desert and the parched land will exult; the steppe will rejoice and bloom. They will bloom with abundant flowers, and rejoice with joyful song.” (Isaiah 35:1-2) In a desert environment, images of flowing water and lush greenery are signs of good fortune, of blessing and prosperity, and, of course, of joy. But joy is meant to be shared. “Strengthen the hands that are feeble,” is a statement designed to help us be with others. It is not “strengthen your own weak hands,” but strengthen the hands of others. Notice, too, that the healing comes from the sharing of the joy. Wholeness comes from the invitation, the reaching out, the welcoming, and the inclusion.

However, the Gospel text does not seem to be dripping with joy. John the Baptist who was in prison had this moment of doubt sending his disciples to ask Jesus this question: "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" But, Jesus dispelled the doubt by replying to John the Baptist's messengers: "Go and tell John what you hear and see - “The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up.” These facts are the reason for celebrating Gaudete Sunday. The Lord is near! Not only is the Lord near, He is with us here and now!

While Jesus heals our lesions, binds our wounds and gives us new life, there is another reason to be joyful these days at St. James as our church gets “re-furbished”.

Happy Gaudete Sunday! May we proclaim the joy of the presence of God.

*Blessings,
Ben*