

3rd Sunday Advent (A)

- The great astronomer, Galileo, born near Florence, in the year 1564, confirmed what Copernicus had said already, namely, that it is the earth that goes round the sun, & not vice versa.
- His discoveries greatly enlarged our knowledge of the universe & yet he spent his last years in darkness under house arrest by the Inquisition because his revelation went against the long-held belief, that was understood to be fact - that the sun revolved around our stationary earth.
- Galileo reminds me of John the Baptist.
- Like Galileo, John the Baptist ushered in a new age - the age of Jesus - which was expected & hoped-for, but not recognised when it did arrive.
- And like Galileo he died in darkness because people couldn't accept the truth.
- John was the last & greatest of the long line of prophets who prepared the people for the coming of the Messiah.
- He was one of those selfless & courageous people who kept alive the hopes of the people during the long night of expectation, when it seemed that the dawn would never come.
- Advent is a season of waiting, a season of preparing so that we may be able to welcome the coming of Jesus into our lives & world with open hearts.
- The purple colour of the vestments & of the Advent candles highlight our need for disciplined receptiveness & the courage to alter ways of thinking & behaving that are blocking life; but, the liturgical colour today changes to a rose pink because the Readings of today's Mass move away from our need for repentance to focus on the joy of what we are about to receive.
- We used to call this *Gaudete* Sunday - a Latin expression meaning 'rejoice', from the words of today's Entrance Antiphon: 'Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice! The Lord is near'.
- In the First Reading the prophet Isaiah can hardly wait for the time when we who are in many ways so blind will see: see who God is & therefore who we really are; see the wonderful destiny to which we are called & how we are to live so as to reach our goal; see through the distractions that take us nowhere; see what real matters.
- He can hardly wait for the time when we learn to listen - listen to the gentle word of God coming to us, reassuring us of God's love in the sorrowful as well as the joyful events of our life.
- Often enough we find that we are paralysed: we are stuck, unable to move, unable to find a way through the problems that surround & overwhelm us, but Isaiah is convinced that we will find a way: the lame will walk.

- We might wonder what is the meaning of our life, what contribution we might make to the world, what is the value of our loving.
- The prophet promises us that God will come to us & our hearts will rejoice.
- When our hearts are fearful, he tells us to have courage: 'Here is your God. He will come & save you. He will guide you along the way of holiness'.
- In the Gospel we turn to Jesus & we are encouraged to ask ourselves the question: Is Jesus the one for whom I am waiting or am I looking for someone/something different?
- And Matthew gives us a checklist by which we can test ourselves.
- When you are one with Jesus, especially when you are in communion with him here at the Eucharist, but also when you are in communion with him in your daily life, do you notice that you can see better: see what to do, see how to respond, see the meaning of your life, see how to love?
- Do you listen better - to the hearts of those close to you, to the cry of those who are hurting, to the inspiration of God's Spirit in your heart?
- Jesus promised a peace that the world cannot give; He promised us a life that would have meaning because it would be a life of love whatever our circumstances; He promised to share with us the intimacy of his closeness with the Father - he is the one who gives meaning to all our work & suffering, to our living & dying; he alone can fulfil our deepest longings.
- The question for us is: Do we see God at work in our lives & in our world?
- Are we able to recognize Jesus in others, in myself & among us in our parish & Eucharistic celebrations; in the people & voices we consider most unlikely; in those who "press our buttons"?
- And then we need to ask ourselves: are we prophetic by announcing in our words & our lives the Good News of Jesus Christ – doing the things he did for the world's blind, poor & lame?
- Can others see & hear God through us?
- Our Christmas can't simply be about Jesus' birth a long time ago, celebrating an historical anniversary; it has to be more than that - the celebration of a fresh discovery of an ever-deepening presence of Christ in each of us.
- So, as we prepare to take the child Jesus into our lives, let us get in touch with our longings, resist the distractions that can clutter this sacred season of rejoicing & expectation & pray that the love of God will purify our hearts & minds so that this Christmas will be for us & for those we love, a season of profound & lasting joy.
- And let us trust in the One who is to come & make his home among us, & be ready to welcome him into our lives.