

2017

- Even after Jesus' Ascension, many thought John the Baptist had been the Messiah, and this is why John the Apostle and the other Gospel writers adamantly state that even the Baptist affirmed: "*I am NOT the Christ.*"
-
- We heard last weekend Jesus declare: "*Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist.*" (Matthew 11:11)
- And yet, that verse continued: "*...yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*" (Matthew 11:11)—US—not by merit, but in the privilege of being recipients of what John could not have dreamed of—the grace of God given through the Church, the New Testament scriptures and the sacraments—most of all the Eucharist...the very Body, Blood, soul and divinity of Him whose sandal John knew he was unworthy to untie.
- To receive God Himself—an unimaginable condescension and gift of the divinity to His creatures...and yet, whom He nevertheless even calls to become His children.

-
- Imagine if Jeff Bezos and Bill Gates and Rupert Murdoch called you and said: "We would like you to be our heir; will you come?"
 - And yet God offers us infinitely more—literally, infinitely—more than this finite earth can provide...the treasure that cannot be lost.
 - ...because from God comes all true wealth...all beauty...all wisdom—all true happiness. He is the fountain from which all good things necessarily flow.
 - And Jesus comes with the offer. He, like those wealthy men, has earned the inheritance for us by His Incarnation and self-sacrifice on the cross...and offers it to us on a silver platter.
 - It simply awaits us to retrieve it...by following the directions and the road which He gives us—that road to the Father who awaits us.
-

2017

- Now sometimes people tell me that they missed Mass or prayer because of having a hard time with something that has arisen in life—trouble at work, death in the family, etc.
- But this is exactly the wrong thing to do...for separation from God weakens the strength of grace and religious resolve in our lives.
-
- In the Old West, along the stagecoach routes there were “way stations”—places to rest and be fed...change out the horses, etc. Like even today when after a long stretch of road—such as on I-25 between Santa Fe and Denver.
- In the journey of our lives, the Church is always the “way station” to our promised inheritance. It is here that we received the rest and nourishment to continue.
- For some of us the journey is relatively short; for some of us, a long time. And yet...always the way station is well supplied the strengthening sustenance of God’s grace.
-
- But...we have to stop! If we don’t, we become hungry and weak...and the outlaws are always watch, like wolves watching a herd of bison for weakness...looking to cull out the weak for the kill...
- ...all because we did not stop to be refreshed...did not, as Jesus tells the apostles “come away and rest a while”...and thus were not fed with the food that strengthens: the grace that comes through prayer and the sacraments...good works and reading of scripture.
-
- That grace not only gives us strength, but wisdom—wisdom and realization that comes only from God.
- We remember Jesus’ prayer: *“I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike...”* (Luke 10:21)... *“[for] no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”* (Matthew 11:27)

2017

- And to whom will Christ choose to reveal the Father except those who keep company with Him?...
- This theme St. Paul repeats: “...*consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong...*” (1 Corinthians 1:26-27)
- One becomes wise by God’s grace in hearing His Word given through scripture and subsequent fidelity...and by prayer, the sacraments, and the good works that manifest love of neighbor.
-
- Paul also tells us today: “*Test everything; retain what is good*”... similar to the letter to the Hebrews, which states: “*Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings...*” (Hebrews 13:9)...and Paul to Timothy: “...*stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught...*” (2 Thessalonians 2:15)
- And so we must take care not to be drawn away from the sources of grace, and compare all to Church’s teaching...knowing that, as Paul warns us: “...*even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light*” (2 Cor 11:14)...and the old adage: “*All that glitters is not gold.*”

-
- We have every reason to be joyful, for Christ offers us eternal life, regardless of the roughness of the journey of this life—if we remain faithfully on His road. The rougher the road, the more we ought come to the waters of grace, not abandon them.
 - ...and so, as we near the joy of Christmas, as Paul says in our reading today: “*May the God of peace make you perfectly holy, and may you entirely—spirit, soul and body—be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

Reading I [Is 61:1-2a, 10-11](#)

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor,
to heal the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives
and release to the prisoners,
to announce a year of favor from the LORD
and a day of vindication by our God.

I rejoice heartily in the LORD,
in my God is the joy of my soul;
for he has clothed me with a robe of salvation
and wrapped me in a mantle of justice,
like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem,
like a bride bedecked with her jewels.
As the earth brings forth its plants,
and a garden makes its growth spring up,
so will the Lord GOD make justice and praise
spring up before all the nations.

Responsorial Psalm [Lk 1:46-48, 49-50, 53-54.](#)

R. (Is 61:10b) My soul rejoices in my God.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked upon his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed:

R. My soul rejoices in my God.

the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.

R. My soul rejoices in my God.

He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,

R. My soul rejoices in my God.

Reading II [1 Thes 5:16-24](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing.

In all circumstances give thanks,

for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.

Do not quench the Spirit.

Do not despise prophetic utterances.

Test everything; retain what is good.

Refrain from every kind of evil.

May the God of peace make you perfectly holy
and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body,
be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
The one who calls you is faithful,
and he will also accomplish it.

Gospel [Jn 1:6-8, 19-28](#)

A man named John was sent from God.
He came for testimony, to testify to the light,
so that all might believe through him.
He was not the light,
but came to testify to the light.

And this is the testimony of John.
When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests
and Levites to him
to ask him, “Who are you?”
He admitted and did not deny it,
but admitted, “I am not the Christ.”
So they asked him,
“What are you then? Are you Elijah?”
And he said, “I am not.”
“Are you the Prophet?”
He answered, “No.”
So they said to him,
“Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us?
What do you have to say for yourself?”
He said:
“I am *the voice of one crying out in the desert,*
‘make straight the way of the Lord,’”
as Isaiah the prophet said.”
Some Pharisees were also sent.
They asked him,
“Why then do you baptize
if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?”
John answered them,
“I baptize with water;
but there is one among you whom you do not recognize,
the one who is coming after me,
whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie.”
This happened in Bethany across the Jordan,
where John was baptizing.