Word Sharing Circle (WSC) Reflection Guide
Third Sunday of Advent (Cycle C, Year I)
December 16, 2012

Community Word: Disciples of Christ prepare with vigilance and rejoicing for His coming

Theme: We prepare for the coming of Christ when we rejoice with gladness and are renewed in His love.

Promise: "Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (Phil 4:7)

Reflection:

A CALL TO CONNECTEDNESS

On the Third Sunday of Advent, the pink candle that stands in the middle of the Advent wreath is lit and our Church refers to this day as Gaudete Sunday or which is commonly known among Catholics as “Rejoice Sunday.” As we get into the middle of the Advent Season our spiritual environment somewhat relaxes into a joyous atmosphere, in contrast to the urgency with which we were called to repentance and renewal at the beginning of the season.

On the Third Sunday of Advent we are being invited to rejoice because the source of true joy is coming and we await His coming not only with joyful expectancy but we also are filled with the assurance that the sin and perversity to which this world has sunk will soon be replaced by the deep joy that will last forever. The prophet Zephaniah in the first reading (Zeph 3:17-18) says that the Lord’s favor has come upon the Israelites. In fact, this favor according to prophet has been accompanied by the coming of the Lord, the King of Israel who will take great delight on the people and have removed from them their sorrows for they have become a burden and a reproach to them.

But in line with the observance of the Jewish tradition of having forerunners announce the arrival of very prominent officials or individuals, God will also send a herald to make straight the way for the Lord. And this was what John the Baptist said when the people asked him who he was: “I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire,” (v.18). To understand the meaning of what John said, we have to go back in history to give us an idea of what he said.

We need also to realize that the roads in those days were unpaved and in some instances are mere tracks. They are what we may call as dirt roads and it didn’t matter actually because the form of transport at that time was usually on horseback, camels, or with a caravan with wagons and carts pulled by oxen. And it was customary that these roads are smoothen out and paved to prepare for the coming of a dignitary or a king who was to visit his domain. In calling on the people to straighten their ways what John the Baptist was actually saying was that the hearts of men could be likened to the unpaved roads with their corrupt behavior and which they need to smoothen to prepare for the coming of the Lord. What John was also saying was that ‘I am a nobody, don’t look at me. Look at the king who is to come and whose coming I am preparing the way.’

In essence, we who embrace the Christian faith have also been appointed as heralds and by the spiritual laws of succession we also inherited the role of John the Baptist and our mandate is to serve as messengers to prepare the way for the coming of Christ. But central
to this role are the pathways within us for we cannot go out into the world to proclaim the coming of the King if we ourselves have not seen Him. This is where the Baptism of Repentance that John the Baptist preached becomes a reality because our baptism in the Spirit should move us to repent of our sins and surrender our sinful nature to Our Lord the Christ. As we do, we also die to our old selves and are born anew into a new life (2 Cor 5:17).

I remember one time when I attended a mass on Gaudete Sunday that was celebrated by Fr. Joel Vernon Alano, Spiritual Director and one of the Formators of the San Pablo Seminary in Baguio City who said in his homily that there are three things we need to remember on Gaudete Sunday:

1. We are to be a LIGHT though we must remember that this light in us must reflect the True Light which is Christ. He said Gaudete Sunday is a call to holiness and we can do this by being connected to the source of light. As we cannot light ourselves, our connectedness to the True Light which is Christ assures us of the flow of Grace that should fill our lives before we can go on mission.

2. We must also SHINE if we are to be like a candle. We shine by the kind of love that we have for one another. We shine by being a forgiving person. We shine by being humble like John. As we have been gifted with talents and skills, Fr. Alano suggests that we are to use these gifts for the community but we must not lose track of the fact that we should shine to give glory to God.

3. Finally as a candle that shines, our lives must continually BURN. As we are living on borrowed time, our lives also melt like the lit candle but the question is do we burn and shine like John who led others to Christ or do we become a block to others from receiving Christ. As baptized Christians, Fr. Alano urged the lay faithful to shine and to keep the light entrusted to us to burn brightly.

In a pastoral exhortation, our Global Spiritual Director, Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, reminded us to use this Advent Season to remain connected to Christ and to find a balance between our functions on one hand and spirituality on the other. His Grace urged all the leaders of the community to use the grace of office that we have received to serve our Community while maintaining our connectedness to the source of all power and grace. Similarly, the responsibility of bring the light to others especially the unchurched should not rest on leaders alone but on every individual who has received Christ in their hearts.

Reflection Questions:

1. Recall at least an instance when you really felt the joy of the Lord in your heart.

2. What are you prepared to do to keep the light that is in you shining and burning as a disciple of Christ?

This Week's Daily Mass Reading Guide:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 16, 2012 (Sun)</td>
<td>Zep 3:14-18/ Is 12:2-6/ Phil 4:4-7/ Lk 3:10-18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 17, 2012 (Mon)</td>
<td>Gn 49:2,8-10/ Ps 72:3,4,7,8,17/ Mt 1:1-17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 18, 2012 (Tues)</td>
<td>Jer 23:5-8/ Ps 72:1,2,12,13,18,19/ Mt 1:18-24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 19, 2012 (Wed)</td>
<td>Jg 13:2-7, 24,25/ Ps 71:3-6,17,18/ Lk 1:5-25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 20, 2012 (Thur)</td>
<td>Is 7:10-14/ Ps 24:1-6/ Lk 1:26-38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 21, 2012 (Fri)</td>
<td>Sg 2:8-14 or Zep 3:14-18/ Ps 233:2,3,11,12,20,21/Lk 1:39-45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 22, 2012 (Sat)</td>
<td>1Sm 1:24-28/ 1Sm 2:1,4-8/ Lk 1:46-56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Ignorance of the Bible is ignorance of Christ. Read your Bible daily!"