



Bible Study

3rd Sunday in Advent Year A

WALK IN THE LIGHT – BE A WITNESS.

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Parishes

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Jesus said to them in reply, *“Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me.”* Matt. 11:4-6 NABRE

Reading I: Isaiah 35:1-6, 10

Walk In the Light – Be a Witness. During this week in Advent, we are asked to focus on our lives as witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This requires that we: 1) know what the Gospel teaches; 2) live in a way that reflects the teachings of the Gospel; and 3) share the message of Jesus Christ with others. The last one can be defined as the “Witness Principle”. Basically, the Witness Principle says this: You can't do it alone. Throughout the Bible, God requires two witnesses to establish truth. Many holy men and women prepared the way for Jesus, who was the first witness. The Church, Christ's body on earth throughout time, is the second witness. Jesus said in the last days He would send prophets,



Even the barren and dry
land will rejoice and
bloom.

wise men and scribes to proclaim His coming kingdom ([Matthew 23:34](#)). This is our role; to be a witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The first reading echoes many of the themes of Deuteronomy that God will deliver His people from despair. Israel was delivered from slavery in Egypt. In these verses Isaiah is a witness to the mercy of God, as Israel is freed from bondage in Babylon by Cyrus. Verses 1-5 give witness to a message of encouragement and resurrection. The image of a fertile desert yielding the hidden beauty of the crocus, and the fertile land of Sharon and Carmel are offered as natural witnesses to God's power, mercy and kindness. Isaiah encourages us to show these attributes of God to each other ([vv. 4-6](#)). This is how we are strengthened. This is how our eyes are opened. This is how we meet God – when we are witnesses of His goodness and love. DISCUSSION QUESTION: List five ways in which you are a witness to the Gospel?

SHARON

The name Sharon has two meanings in the Bible. [SHAR uhn] (Meaning unknown) - The name of a plain and a district in the Old Testament:
1. The chief coastal plain of Palestine, running approximately 80 kilometers (50 miles) from south of the Carmel Mountain range to the vicinity of Joppa ([1 Chron 27:29](#)). This lowland region was extremely fertile and it was known for its agriculture ([Isa 33:9](#)). In ancient times, an important caravan route ran along the Plain of Sharon, connecting Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Asia Minor. The flowers of Sharon ([Isa 35:2](#)), particularly the rose of Sharon ([Song 2:1](#)), were beautiful. Sharon is also called Lasharon ([Josh 12:18](#)).
2. A district in Transjordan, the area east of the Jordan River, occupied by the tribe of Gad ([1 Chron 5:16](#)). (From Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

Reading II: James 5:7-10

Walk In the Light – Be a Witness. This reading from the Letter of St. James provides an example to all Christians on how to be effective witnesses of the Gospel of Christ. St. James identified himself as, *“...a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ”*([1:1](#)). He shows us that the first quality of a Christian witness is humility.

The Letter of St. James is a compact letter on practical religion that encourages living the Christian life and not merely professing it. It is written to the *“twelve tribes of the Dispersion”*, that is, the Jewish Christians who lived outside of Palestine. In verses 7-10, St. James encourages [patience](#), as the early Christians awaited the coming of the Lord. The image of the farmer is a familiar one that was used by Jesus himself ([Matt. 13:3](#)).

St. James offers the example of [kindness](#) as a witness to the Gospel of Jesus. Whining and complaining are not attributes of a witness of Jesus Christ. He offers the positive example of the prophets and other witnesses, who suffered for Christ's sake ([Matt. 5:12](#)). DISCUSSION QUESTION: List three qualities of a witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11

Walk In the Light – Be a Witness. “Can I get a witness,” is a refrain that is often used in dynamic and energetic preaching styles. But what does it mean to be a witness for the Gospel? During this Advent Season and everyday of our lives, it means to keep the Commandments of God and live a life that conforms to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our Baptism prepares us to be witnesses of the Gospel, as we are anointed as priests, prophets and kings. Our Baptism makes us witnesses in constant motion, as we live the command of the Great Commission. Jesus not only gathered His disciples, He also sent them. (Matt. 10:5-42, and the various gospel forms of the Great Commission, Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:49; John 20:21, and in Acts 13:2-4). The Great Commission confirms that we are sent to be witnesses. Discipleship, therefore, must always be “*discipleship in motion*”. The disciple, or witness who will not lay down his/her life, or lifestyle for the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not worthy of being a follower of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel gives two examples of the effects of being true witnesses. First, we have the witness of John the Baptist. He came from a priestly family of modest means. He despised the world and lived in isolation. His lifestyle, including his dress, was a witness to the Messiah. Crowds sought him in the desert. He witnessed to them about the advent of the Messiah (3:1-12). It is through his witness that we see the second effect of being a true witness in the Gospel reading where Jesus reveals Himself.

It was John’s arrest that prompted Jesus to begin His ministry (4:12). John heard of the “works of the Messiah” (v. 2). Perhaps he needed confirmation that Jesus was the Messiah. Just as Isaiah did in the first reading, Jesus affirmed the mercy of God to another son of Abraham, His cousin John. He reminded him with the images of Isaiah that He was the Messiah, which are: the lame walked, the blind received sight, the deaf heard, and the poor received the good news proclaimed to them (vv. 4-6).

Jesus then gave a profound witness about John to the crowd (vv. 7-9). He declared him more than a prophet; a messenger of God and one who played a key role in the preparation of the way for the advent of the Messiah. In verse 11, Jesus declared that John straddled both the Old and New Testament. He was the last and the greatest of the witnesses before the Christ arrived. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What words best describe John the Baptist? What words best describe Jesus the Christ? What words describe your efforts to tell others about Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Pray About It.

Monday

Read James 5:7-10. Encourage someone today.

Tuesday

Read Matt. 28:18-19. Offer a kind word to someone who has hurt you.

Wednesday

Read Luke 24:49. Pray for someone who has helped you.

Thursday

Mark 4:26-29. How does scripture study help you to be a witness for the Gospel of Christ?

Friday

Attend Mass and receive the Eucharist.

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH WITNESS OF THE GOSPEL

2472 The duty of Christians to take part in the life of the Church impels them to act as *witnesses of the Gospel* and of the obligations that flow from it. This witness is a transmission of the faith in words and deeds. Witness is an act of justice that establishes the truth or makes it known.

2473 *Martyrdom* is the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith: it means bearing witness even unto death. The martyr bears witness to Christ who died and rose, to whom he is united by charity. He bears witness to the truth of the faith and of Christian doctrine. He endures death through an act of fortitude. “Let me become the food of the beasts, through whom it will be given me to reach God...”

Resources: *The Gospel of Matthew*, Curtis Mitch, Edward Sri, Baker Academic Grand Rapids, Mi., p. 150-152; *The Gospel of Matthew*, Commentary Notes & Study Questions. Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition, Scott Hahn, Curtis Mitch, Denise Walters Ignatius Press San Francisco; pp. 35-36; *The Sunday Readings Cycle C* Kevin O’Sullivan, O. F. M. Franciscan Press, Quincy University, Quincy, Ill. pp. 14-20; *The Letter of James*, Jerome H. Neyrey, S. J., Collegeville Bible Commentary, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minn., p. 1219-1227; *Living Liturgy Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities Year C* 2014, Joyce Zimmerman, C. PP. S. Kathleen Harmon, S.N.D. de N., Christopher W. Canlon, S. M. Liturgical Press Collegeville, Mn. pp. 12-15

This meditation is prepared by Deacon Terrel J. Broussard for personal use in Adult Faith Formation at St. Peter Claver and St Maria Goretti Parishes in New Orleans, La. ©2013