

A Short Teaching on Anxiety
by Deacon Gerry Palermo

Greetings on this the Third Sunday of Advent

Readings: ZEP 3:14-18A; IS 12:2-3, 4, 5-6; PHIL 4:4-7; LK 3:10-18

The crowds asked John the Baptist, “What should we do?”

John was compelling in his proclamations. He warned of the duplicity of their lives and exhorting them in many ways, he preached good news to the people of the coming Messiah.

So why were they anxious? Because they identified with both parts of his message:

- (1) The need for a Messiah.
- (2) The need for conversion. #2 is integral to #1.

Be glad and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! Your time of visitation has arrived. The Lord has forgiven you and will restore you... again, you have no further misfortune to fear.

So why be anxious? They needed to hear what he would prescribe to resolve the dilemma. Interestingly John starts with charity. He denotes two types of charity.

Extra cloak – a cloak is something critical to sustain life especially at night and in cold weather. A single cloak is a permanent gift. A poor man can make a cloak last a lifetime. This is dignity.

Extra food – food is something we need every day to sustain life. Yet a single gift of food is not sufficient. A habit or lifetime of charity is needed for it to have effect. This is solidarity.

Yet for many in the gospel reading they had to start at the level of basic righteousness.

- (1) Tax Collectors - Stop collecting more than what is prescribed. This is human rights and social responsibilities.
- (2) Soldiers - Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, be satisfied with your wages. This is the Option for the Poor and Vulnerable.

Anxiety is a product of unrighteous living or missing the mark. Sleep better. Be just with mercy.

Peace be with you.

Deacon Gerry