

Third Sunday of Advent

Year B

Is 61: 1-2, 10-11

Response: Lk 1: 46-48, 49-50, 53-54

I Thes 5: 16-24

John 1: 6-8, 19-28

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Pink (or as we Church people call it – Rose) has crossed the chasm that separates the genders and within this last year is now an acceptable color for men. In the first few months of this color migration when one man saw another wearing pink, he would say to himself (among other things), “That guy must be secure in his masculinity to wear that.” If nothing else, there were a host of identity issues circulating because of this change in the fashion world.

In the gospel, John is confronted with the question, “Who are you?” People know there is something distinctly different about this man. Is it his clothes? Is it his message? Is it his behavior? Whatever may have raised this path of inquiry, it brought about a watershed moment in John’s life. He had to ask himself, “Who am I?” “What am I about?” “What am I doing?” “Where am I going?” “Am I secure in my identity?” (Well, maybe not this last question.)

This is the appropriate Gospel for Advent. It is a time for all of us to raise the same list of questions. How would we answer if someone asked, “Who are you?” In some way, people answer this by the gift they buy you or don’t buy you during this Christmas shopping time. I’m sure every one of us has opened a present and thought, “Wow, this is perfect. This person really knows me and what I need.” Or, we have thought, “What in God’s name was this person thinking when they bought this. I would never be seen dead with this thing.” What will happen on Christmas day when you open a box and see a pink sweater?

John’s answer to the identity question is critical. He knows that people think more of him than he actually is. He doesn’t give in to the temptation of hubris nor does he hear the Siren song that would crash him upon the rocks of self service. No, John states that his life is about service. He is just a voice announcing a greater one yet to come. Can’t we too be a voice; a voice that announces the presence of a greater one in our lives? Will our identity be threatened if it is not all about us, but about the Other, about Him, about Jesus?

It is important for us to find our voice. Many times, it is in disappointment and failure that the opportunity for discovering our voice arrives. You are a student in high school and you don’t make the team. You thought you had to be an ice hockey or basketball player. But life goes on and you realize that this was not your voice. The person whom you have been dating decides to move on to another relationship and you wonder how you can go on. But then you realize you are so much more than you were with this person in your life and that this was not your voice. You lose your job because a company shifts the direction in which it was going and you have never done anything else and you wonder what will the future hold. You will realize over time that you are not one-dimensional and that this was not your voice.

In the life of the Church, this is *Gaudete* Sunday, the Sunday of rejoicing. We realize that our Savior draws near. We also realize that we are not that Savior, only the voice that announces him to the world in joy. We must find our voice. Our voice comes in thankfulness. Our joy comes because of the blessings we have received in abundance – our family, our friends, our health, our faith. Truly, we are in the pink!