

2019 December 15  
**Third Sunday of Advent**

**Readings:**

**First:** Isaiah 35.1-6a, 10, "The desert shall rejoice and blossom." (1b)

**Psalm:** 146, "The Lord opens the eyes of the blind." (8a)

**Second:** James 5.7-19, "Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near." (8b)

**Gospel:** Matthew 11.2-11, "Go and tell John what you hear and see." (4)

### *The Baptist in Trouble!*

All of us go through moments, sometimes days, months or even years experiencing the absence of God in life. For over 37 years St. Theresa of Calcutta (Mother Theresa) went through such experience. In spite of it, many of these through their life and witnessing proclaim the glory of God and his presence in the world and among us.

These days the bombardments about the absence or even non-existence of God seem to be going loud and getting currency. Those who continue to believe are ridiculed, excluded and intimidated. God is being banished from the public space, Christ from Christmas! In today's gospel John the Baptist is going through the experience of the eclipse of God. He only baptized Jesus and pointed out to his own disciples this Jesus as the *Lamb of God*. However, in his solitary confinement in prison, the Baptist himself is in the dark. He doesn't experience the light of God. He is really in doubt if he did enough to fulfil his life's mission, to be the herald of the Messiah, if at all did he ever meet the Messiah!

Those disciples of the Baptist, at his prompting, went after reported back to him amazing stories about Jesus, just as predicted by Isaiah, "...*the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them...*" (Matthew 11:5; Isaiah 35:5-6). Did the Baptist get the answer he was looking for? No proof that he did.

Very often we too are likely not to get the answer we look for from God then and there. However, Jesus has a testimony, "*Among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist*". Jesus has also something to console us, "*yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist.*" (Matthew 11.11) How about joining these 'Least' ones? James today has a piece of advice to us, "*Be patient, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord!*" (James 5:7). It could be really a long wait, but worth doing!

