

Joy Sunday

When I was in Maui some parishioners designed and commissioned a new liturgical array for Gaudete Sunday and Laetare Sunday. These are one Sunday each in Advent and Lent that offers a mid-inning stretch in the midst of penitential seasons. The names of each Sunday come from the traditional liturgical sentences for the day meaning “rejoice”. And even more importantly, they are both imperatives: Thou Shalt Rejoice. The traditional liturgical color is “rose” but my community in Maui embraced a more tropical take with hot pink silk that they had sourced from India. Its very exuberance amplified that sense of “rejoicing”. That would be quite lovely liturgical project for next year, perhaps.



While we are at it, we might also create an advent array in blue. There is a movement away from purple, the penitential color of Lent, to stress that the preparation that we do for Advent is different than the preparation for Good Friday and Easter.

Blue as the color for Advent has good Anglican antecedents. We have references from the cathedral of Salisbury in England in the middle ages that refers to it using blue as its liturgical color. The Anglican Church has stressed its continuity with the Catholic Church in England prior to the Reformation, and in particular likes to look at the liturgy from Salisbury as a source to look at for liturgical reform, as a uniquely English liturgy.

Does that matter? Not much, I suppose. Except for the whole purpose of the liturgical year, which is to help focus the senses on worship. The change of colors is an appeal to the senses to not just intellectually understand the movement of God's time as it relates to our history, but to do so through the senses, through beauty.

So, this is the time in the midst of whatever is going on for you in your life, this coming Sunday is a time to remind you to rejoice. There is an interesting thing that psychologists have noticed. Focussing our attention on the positive, creates positivity in our brains and in our moods. Similarly, focusing our attention on the negative, creates negativity in our brains and moods.

This is one of the gifts of following Jesus. Worship focusses our attention, our minds and our hearts on Jesus, his death and resurrection and his coming again in glory. You have likely heard in my preaching that I keep coming back to emphasizing the positive in scripture. The flip side of that is helping to do some corrective teaching about how Christians sometimes have a very unhelpful habit of turning the Good News into something dark by focusing on the negative. We make redemption to be about being forgiven from sin, when it is about being made immortal, becoming like God, not to put too fine of a point on it. Eternal life is not about life that never ends, because eternity exists outside of time. It is about entering into life that is immersed in eternity. As St. Irenaeus put it God became human in order that humans might be made fully alive.



And so, please join us this Sunday for Joy Sunday. If you want, feel free to wear something pink-ish or rosy. But even more important, lets take joy together as we worship God. And don't forget the hot apple cider which I will bring, which is one way that I try to share a little joy.

Peace be with you

Fr. Craig+